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SANCTUARY OF THE JE

BY

REV. JOHN ADAMS, B.I.

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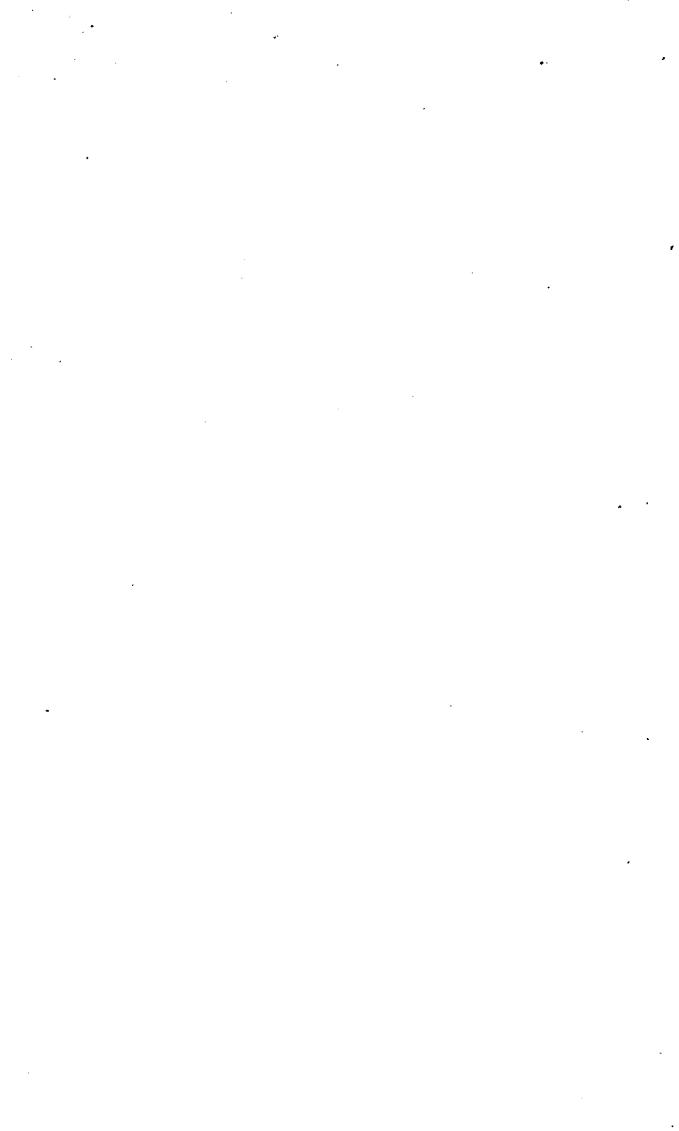
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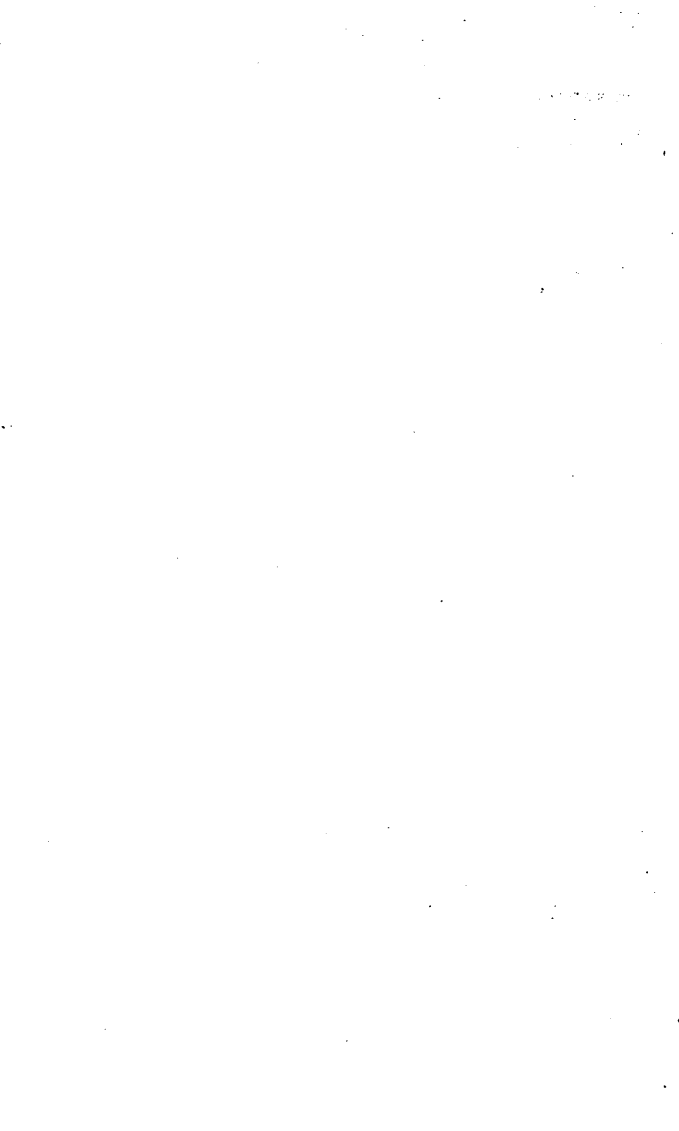
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THE MOSAIC TABERNACLE

**STUDIES IN THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE
SANCTUARY OF THE JEWS**

BY

REV. JOHN ADAMS, B.D.

IMPORTED BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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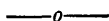
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THE MOSAIC TABERNACLE



PART I

PRIESTHOOD

I. GENERAL IDEA OF PRIESTHOOD.—According to Heb. v. 1 a priest is appointed for a twofold purpose—(1) to represent man (2) to intercede with God. He is taken from among men, and therefore is their friend and brother; but it is in things pertaining to God, and therefore he is their mediator and intercessor. This idea of priesthood is not confined to Scripture or to the Jewish people. It is universal. It is the outcome of a religious instinct in man, and means that man was made to be a seeker after God.

The need for such an institution may have arisen in two ways—(1) from the sense of human *weakness*, (2) from the consciousness of human *sin*. In his savage state man lives in abject terror of the mighty beings by whom he is surrounded. He feels that he is incapable of coping with these mysterious and often malevolent powers. Not daring to approach them in his own person, he seeks relief in the inter-

vention of human mediators who will stand between him and the invisible agents whom he desires to propitiate. By-and-by, when he passes from this savage state and comes to think of his god as possessing moral qualities, his difficulty, instead of being lessened, is only increased. Contrasted with a god of mere power he may feel his own helplessness, but compared with a just and holy God he feels his own sinfulness. The need of one holier and wiser than himself to intercede with Deity is greater than ever, and the fruits of this religious instinct appear in the institution of priesthood.

In Scripture itself there are four different stages in the development of this idea, which we may characterise as follows :

1. *The Priesthood of the Family*

No better example could be cited than that of the patriarch Job, who rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of his children : "For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually" (Job i. 5). But it is already seen in the case of Noah, who stood before God in a double capacity—as the most righteous man of his generation and as the representative of his family. As such he offered on their behalf a sacrifice of thanksgiving in token of their divine deliverance (Gen. viii. 20). This, in fact, is the prevailing type of priesthood throughout the patriarchal era. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all perform sacrificial acts within the circle of their own households (Gen. xii. 7 ; xxvi. 25 ; xxxi. 54). And not

without significance is it added, in Gen. viii. 21, that "the Lord smelled a sweet savour"; for in such a priesthood the supreme importance of family religion is expressed, and all the relations of family life are sanctified by it.

2. *The Priesthood of the Nation*

By this is meant the Levitical or national priesthood, which, according to the priestly legislation, is to be traced back to the days of Moses. The tribes themselves were being consolidated into a nation, and some larger institution that would appeal to them as such was needed. Hence one tribe—the tribe of Levi—was selected for ministration, and one family of that tribe—the family of Aaron—was solemnly consecrated to the priesthood. All others were excluded from the holy service—the separation between priest and people was complete. Cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 19, where Uzziah was smitten with the terrible mark of leprosy because he dared to obtrude himself within the holy place to burn incense.

But, however legitimate and exclusive the Levitical priesthood may be, it has not weakened, far less destroyed, the priesthood of the family. It has come not to destroy, but to fulfil. The people continue to go up as households to offer the yearly sacrifices (1 Sam. i. 21), and at the Passover especially, while the main priestly function (the smearing of the blood upon the altar) is the exclusive prerogative of the priests, the slaying of the victim by the father himself and the eating of the roasted lamb within the home sufficiently stamp

the character of the festival as essentially a family feast. It is probably in this way that we are to explain the significant fact that the offerer himself had to slay the victim (*cf.* Lev. i. 5, 11). This does not mean that the priestly action is to be confined to the handling of the blood, and that the killing of the animal is not to be regarded as a sacrificial act at all. The true view of Old Testament sacrifice draws no such distinction between the two acts. "The whole sacrificial action, death and offering of the blood, is one."* And if the officiating priest is not allowed to combine both acts in his own person (except on the day of atonement, Lev. xvi. 11, when he was offerer as well as priest), the meaning is that the Levitical priesthood is not ideally perfect, but that in every sacrificial action the family priesthood, no less than the national, has its legitimate share. It is not until we come to the ideal priesthood of Christ that we find the two sides of the priestly action combined in one mediatorial function. He slays the victim and He sprinkles the blood. He is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

3. *The World-wide Priesthood of Christ*

The idea of priesthood was not associated with the earthly life of Jesus by any of His contemporaries. Believing Jews could only think according to Jewish modes of thought, and so long as the temple stood and Old Testament sacrifices continued to be offered they could see no similarity between the human life of Christ and the practice of those who ministered at the altar.

* A. B. Davidson's "Hebrews," p. 200.

He might be a prophet, for never man spake like this man ; or a king (albeit a spiritual one), for they heard Him confess as much before sanhedrim and synagogue ; but a *priest*—no, that conception could never have occurred to them as either congruous or probable, for nothing was so unlike the *role* or ritual of the priests as the life and walk of the lowly Nazarene. It was not until He ascended into the heavens that the true significance of His earthly ministry dawned upon His chosen followers. Going within the veil was itself high-priestly work, and in the light of that fact everything connected with His life and death was transfigured with new meaning. It was at once seen that His life of humiliation was the necessary preparation for the perfect exercise of His priesthood, and that in two ways : (1) It had enabled Him to gain experience as our friend and brother. (2) It had afforded Him the opportunity of performing the first half of His priestly work—offering Himself as a pure sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. His mediation, then, was wider than either family or national priesthood. It was broad as the brotherhood of humanity—the ideal priesthood of the race.

4. The Individual Priesthood of Believers

The last stage in the development of this idea is the apostolic priesthood of Christian men. Cf. St Peter's language, "A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5) ; or St John's, "He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto God

and His Father" (Rev. i. 6) — terms which imply that there are respects in which believers are to carry forward the work committed to patriarch, Levite and Saviour.

For what are the "spiritual sacrifices" that Christians are called upon to offer? (1) The dedication of the entire life to God, which is so fitly symbolised by the ritual of the burnt-offering (*cf.* Rom. xii. 1). (2) The sacrifice of prayer, which, like a cloud of incense, is to be wafted heavenwards — the intercession of the divine Spirit, unutterable in its fervour, being the sacred altar-fire in which we are to burn our own (*cf.* Rom. viii. 26). (3) The presenting of the firstfruits on God's altar — the firstfruits of the lips, as when we offer the sacrifice of praise; and the firstfruits of the life, as when we bring our gifts on behalf of God's house or bestow our alms on behalf of God's poor. These are like a column of smoke ascending to heaven, fragrant as that of the ram of consecration at the dedication of the priests, leading the apostle to say of the grace of Christian liberality that it was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. iv. 18).

2. THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.—It is not within the scope of the present series of studies to enter into any detailed discussion of the development of Israel's institutions. Some general remarks must suffice on this aspect of the subject.

1. *The Modern View of Old Testament Priesthood*

The Levitical priesthood, as a completed system, may be likened to a pyramid. Its lowest base is

the tribe of Levi; its middle part, the family of Aaron; its apex, the person of the high priest. The history of the institution may have followed a similar line of development. The Levites collectively have, at first, the unquestioned right to the priesthood (Josh. xiii. 14; xviii. 7); then certain families among them rise into eminence, and gain the sole right to the sacerdotal functions (2 Kings xxiii. 9; Ezek. xl. 45), until at last—when Israel has lost its political existence—the figure of the high priest appears as the representative of religious independence, and sets the crowns of silver and gold upon the Old Testament hierocracy (Zech. vi. 11-13).

In this view of Israel's history there was no distinction between Levites and priests during the first stage of the priesthood. Every Levite was a priest, or, at least, was qualified to become such (Deut. x. 8), and if 1 Kings xii. 31 refuses to acknowledge the legal status of Jeroboam's priests, it is not because they belonged to a rival kingdom, but solely because they were not taken from the sons of Levi. The first trace of a change in this respect has been found in connection with Josiah's reformation in 621 B.C. Having defiled the high places which were in the kingdom of Judah, he brought their priests to Jerusalem, but refused to give them the full privileges of their colleagues in the central sanctuary (2 Kings xxiii. 9). In truth, the abolition of the high places and the concentration of worship at Jerusalem had rendered the ministration of a whole tribe quite impracticable. The appointing of one family to take pre-

cedence of all the others had become a simple necessity; and as the descendants of Aaron were already distinguished by birth and social prestige, the attention of the reforming party was naturally directed to them. In this way a distinction between Aaronites and Levites was formally recognised within the hierarchical order. This distinction was afterwards legalised by Ezekiel (ch. xlv. 10-16), and taken for granted by the author of the priestly code (Num. iii. 9), until, as seen in the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Levites of a post-exilic Judaism were reduced to the rank of mere attendant ministers—the subordinate singers and serfs of the second temple (Ezra ii. 70; Neh. xii. 1).

2. *The Historical Nucleus in the Traditional View*

When, in this view, the whole system came to be traced back to the age and activity of Moses, it is not to be inferred that the priestly codifier of the laws had nothing more to justify his action than the well-established usage of a "legal convention." He had something more and better. The historical basis on which his claim is founded is not so small as some would have us to believe. He had, *e.g.*, such facts as these:—(1) The immemorial existence of the ritual. Whatever view may be advanced respecting the codifying of the laws, the antiquity of the system itself cannot seriously be questioned. "Its usages and traditions are exceedingly ancient, going back, in fact, to pre-Mosaic and heathenish times."* (2) The hereditary pre-eminence of the

* Wellhausen's Art., "Pentateuch," *Ency. Brit.*

Aaronites, or kinsmen of Moses. In the period of the Judges, the priests who had the custody of the Ark claimed to be descended from the family of Moses (1 Sam. ii. 27), and the case of Micah's Levite, who was a grandson of Moses (Judg. xviii. 30, R.V.), shows that a kinsman of the great leader was regarded as a peculiarly fit priest. So that, quite apart from the removal of the high places under Josiah, there would seem to be enough to warrant the assumption that, from the time of Moses downward, his kin had a certain hereditary prerogative in connection with the sacred ritual. (3) The lengthened sojourn in the wilderness, when this whole question regarding idolatrous high places could have had no application whatever. The law of a central sanctuary, and the consequent elevation of one family to the higher functions of the priesthood, did not require to wait for the reforming zeal of any party. It was already present as a determining factor at the very dawn of the national history; and, while Josiah's reformation may have set this unifying principle in a stronger and clearer light, it was there, at least in germ, and after the manner of presentiment, in the peculiar circumstances of the desert. (4) The influence of Egypt. It is frequently said that the question of the origin of the Mosaic system could not be worse answered than by making any reference to the priestly caste in the Valley of the Nile. But we are not so sure of this. If Israel sojourned in Egypt at all, and if Moses, especially, had any connection with the customs and Court of the Pharaohs, it is too much to ask us to accept the statement that the influence

of Egypt is to count for nothing. A fully organised priesthood such as Egypt or Babylonia possessed long before the age of Moses, must have familiarised the ancient world with just such a sacerdotal system as is attributed to Moses by the author of the priestly code. And we are persuaded the more the student knows of the Egyptian or the Babylonian priesthood, the less will he be inclined to cavil at the Mosaic origin of the ceremonial law. He will not be concerned to deny that important changes may have characterised the subsequent unfolding of the Levitical system ; but, keeping in view the series of facts already adduced, he will maintain that when the codifier of the priestly legislation refers it back to the time of the wilderness journey he had sufficient historical testimony to justify his action.

3. The Practical Question and its bearing on the Messianic Fulfilment

In answer to the inquiry, What is left to Moses if he was not the author of the priestly legislation? it is replied that "Moses may have been the founder of the Torah, though the Pentateuchal legislation was codified a thousand years later ; for the Torah was originally not a written law, but the oral decisions of the priests at the sanctuary."* If this be the gist of the divergence between the traditional and modern views of the Mosaic system, it may be safely left to the practical expositor to say what change, if any, is demanded for the due interpretation of the facts. Ezra, no less than Moses,

* Wellhausen.

is centuries removed from the New Testament fulfilment. So that, even though we take his post-exilian standpoint, we have still to read the entire Levitical legislation in the light of a coming Messianic ideal. One man may deem fifteen centuries more effective in the way of prediction than five ; but in point of fact, the predictive element is left where it was ; and if, as already suggested, a sufficient nucleus of history points us back to the age of Moses, the practical problem is not to be solved by an exclusive adoption of either extreme, but by a careful and judicious estimate of them both. Ezra may have systematised and codified what Moses and his successors only practised and taught ; but both the editing and the teaching were simply means to a further end. They are not to be interpreted as if they began and ended with themselves. They are voices crying in the wilderness "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

But note one important contrast between the preparation and the fulfilment. The former was an elaborate attempt on the part of man to get near to God. God's holiness had removed Him far from man—away through a series of outer and inner courts into the holiest of all ; and the problem of the Jewish ritual was to get as near to the Divine as possible. Alas, the problem of Christ and His servants is quite otherwise. It is not to win God, but to break down the barriers on the side of man. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself ; and therefore we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. The entire redemption of Jesus, and the whole scheme of gospel pro-

clamation have this as their end and aim—to melt the heart of man and bring him home to God.

“Return !

O fallen ; yet not lost !

Canst thou forget the life for thee laid down,
The taunts, the scourging, and the thorny crown ;
When o'er thee first my spotless robe I spread
And poured the oil of joy upon thy head,
How did thy wakening heart within thee burn ;
Canst thou remember all, and wilt thou not return ? ”

3. THE LEVITES.—Allusion has been made to the exclusive character of the Levitical legislation. Not even kings were allowed to share in the priestly service. If one like Uzziah dared to approach the golden altar he was immediately smitten, in the very act of sacrilege, with the ashen spot of the leper. No doubt in the earlier days of the monarchy, both Saul (1 Sam. xiii. 9) and David (2 Sam. vi. 13) are represented as performing distinct acts of ritual : just as the early rulers of Babylonia bore the title of *nisāk*, a “sacrificer” or “priest-king,” because in their capacity as regents of the gods they were first and foremost priests.* But it is not certain that the sacrificial action of King Saul was ever recognised by the prophet Samuel (*cf.* ver. 13.) or that David himself dispensed with the services of a priest at the bringing home of the Ark. Even Micah in the hill-country of Ephraim imagined that he had legitimised his worship when he secured a Levite for his priest

* *Cf.* M'Curdy's “History, Prophecy and the Monuments,” vol. i.

See also Gen. xiv. 17, where a similar blending of sovereignty and priesthood is seen in the person of Melchizedek.

(Judg. xvii. 13), and it is not probable that in the higher conceptions of David, a lower estimate of the priestly functions was allowed to regulate the services of that auspicious day. "No man taketh this honour unto himself" (Heb. v. 4). The tribe of Levi, but the tribe of Levi alone, was permitted to engage in the holy service.

1. *Their Origin*

According to Gen. xxix. 34, the ancestor of the tribe was Levi the son of Jacob by his wife Leah. The beginning of their career was dark and ominous enough. It opened with duplicity and bloodshed (Gen. xxxiv). They had granted the right of intermarriage to a neighbouring tribe in the vicinity of Shechem: but had basely violated the solemn compact by wreaking vengeance on the unsuspecting tribesmen. The same event is alluded to in Gen. xlix. 5-7, where without any reference to the extenuating circumstances detailed in chapter xxxiv. the curse of the aged patriarch is pronounced upon their ferocity, and they are scattered abroad in Israel.

This, of course, does not mean that the Levites are entangled in a net that cannot be broken. Hereditary guilt is not the only factor in Old Testament theology. The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that "*hate* me": but what if the children cease to hate? What if the wicked turn from their wickedness, and do that which is right in the sight of heaven? Shall they die? No, none of the sins which they have committed shall be

remembered against them ; for the moral law of individual responsibility is set higher than the natural law of heredity (*cf.* Deut. xxiv. 16 ; Jer. xxxi. 30 ; Ezek. xxxiii. 14-20).

This is the truth illustrated by the subsequent history of the Levites. Smitten by a grievous curse in the person of their first ancestor, they yet win for themselves a deathless name by their zeal for Jehovah in the matter of the Molten Calf (Ex. xxxii. 26-29). Their zeal catches fire, not for the wounded family honour but for God's honour, and the curse is changed into a blessing. Their dispersion in Israel becomes a scattering abroad of priests. Levi has obtained his Consecration (Deut. xxxiii. 8-11).

2. *Their Calling*

They are accepted in lieu of the firstborn sons (Num. iii. 45). A great cry was heard from all parts of the Nile valley, when the firstborn in Egypt were slain. The cataracts answered Thebes, and the pyramids gave back the moan of Memphis ; for "there was not a house where there was not one dead" (Ex. xii. 30). Like a sacrifice offered to an offended deity, the firstborn had endured the curse of extermination that lay upon all. But what of the children of Israel? Did the sword of the destroying angel touch them? No, they had slain the paschal lamb and sprinkled its blood on the threshold of their houses ; and He whose mercy triumphs over judgment said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." True, the firstborn had still to be offered to the God of their redemption : but it was

not as an offering to death—it was a consecration to life. They were to be set apart with a high and holy calling—to appear before Jehovah as a company of priests (Ex. xiii. 2). So that Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, was quite within the terms of this old institution, when she brought her firstborn child Samuel, and left him to minister as a little priest before the Lord in Shiloh (1 Sam. i. 28). Yet even in the time of Moses a great change was introduced with respect to the dedication of the firstborn. God Himself had found a substitute for them in the persons of the tribe of Levi. He came to Moses and said, “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine : I am the Lord.”

Their official position, then, might be regarded under the twofold aspect of *sacrifice* and *service*. They took the place of the whole people of Israel who should have been offered unto Jehovah ; and as such, they were given to Aaron and his sons, to whom in general the use of the firstlings was given, that along with them they might keep the charge of the Tent of meeting for all the service of the Tent (Num. xviii. 1-7). Thus sharing in the Mediatorial functions of the priesthood, they bore the iniquity of the Congregation, and made atonement for them. In fine, they were a wave-offering unto the Lord (Num. viii. 13).

3. *Their Support*

That the Levites might be left unhampered for the perfect exercise of their calling, no inheritance was assigned to them in the general allotment of

the land. Their vocation was to serve the people in things sacred : and the people in turn were made to feel that if God's servants sowed unto them spiritual things it was no great matter if they should reap their carnal things. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox, when he treadeth out the corn" (Deut. xxv. 4).

(a) *The tithe.*—In return for their priestly service, and as a suitable compensation for their deprivation of an inheritance among the tribes, the Levites were to receive the sacred tithe or tribute, which according to ancient custom was paid on the produce of the land (Num. xviii. 21-24). This was one of the ways in which Israel was taught that Jehovah himself was Levi's inheritance (Deut. x. 9). For in antiquity, tithe and tribute were practically identical. The tithe was paid to the god of the land.* Both the land and the people belonged primarily to Jehovah : and as a due acknowledgment of the divine title a portion of the year's produce was surrendered to Him as a substitute for, and consecration of, the whole. To defraud the Levites therefore was simply another way of robbing God ; for the sacred tribute was still His by right, though He had resigned it in favour of His ministers. Their duty to the servant, and their obligation to the Master stood or fell together. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse."

(b) The setting apart of *forty-eight towns* with their suburbs or pasture lands (R.V.) within the territory of the other tribes (Num. xxxv. 1-8). These

* Robertson Smith's "Semites," p. 245.

included the six cities of refuge, in which the hunted manslayer might find an asylum from the fell sweep of the avenger. Cf. the beautiful figure in Ps. xxiii. where the manslayer having reached the shelter of a shepherd's tent is safe-guarded by the closely allied rights of Eastern hospitality. Up to the very tent ropes the avenger of blood may have followed him; but surrounded by this "golden piety of the desert," he can lift up his eyes to his shepherd host and say—fully conscious of the cruel face that is peering through the canvas—"Thou preparest a table before me *in the presence of mine enemies.*"

But, however munificent the endowment may have been which was thus assigned to the Levites, it does not seem to have made their living by any means a sinecure. Many of the allotted towns may never have been conquered at all, or the people generally were only too averse to the full payment of the tithes. In either case the Levites are frequently represented as reduced to comparative poverty, and classed in the same category with strangers, widows and orphans as being in actual need of alms (Deut. xiv. 29). The value of their emoluments, indeed, whether in tithe or in pasture, was closely bound up with the progress of Jehovah's cause. If religion prospered, so would the heritage of the Levites. And thus they themselves learned the lesson so forcibly taught already by the nature of the sacred tribute, that the main hope of the Levitical order was to be found in the presence of Jehovah, who was the portion of their inheritance and the maintainer of their lot (Ps. xvi. 5). Or as the saints of God have acknowledged in

every age since then, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul : therefore will I hope in him" (Lam. iii. 24).

4. THE PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS.—For the position of the Aaronites, as distinct from the other Levites, see the historical sketch in section 2. In the estimation of the Priestly narrator, they represented in a way the sons of Levi could not do, the essential prerogatives of the priesthood. They formed the middle part of the pyramid which had the high priest as its apex : and possessed officially the exclusive right and absolute control of the sanctuary and its services. Their office might be described generally as a service of mediation (Lev. x. 17). And thus being permitted to intervene between the divine and human, they rendered on behalf of the whole people a service of expiation.

1. *The Function of the Ritual*

This is the first element in their mediatorial service, that in things pertaining to God they offered both gifts and sacrifices for sins (Heb. v. 1). The earliest mode of propitiating the Deity was just this use of the sacred ritual. By gifts and sacrifices, or firstfruits and firstlings, Cain and Abel sought acceptance with God, by coming as priests to his altar (Gen. iv. 3, 4). In perfect agreement with early Semitic custom, and with the practice of the patriarchs throughout the pre-Mosaic period, each man acted as his own priest, laying his gift or arranging his sacrifice on the stone which he had erected, and seeking by this act of consecration to merit the goodwill of the Deity.

Even when the patriarchal type of priesthood was merged in the Levitical or national, the importance of the ritual, instead of being diminished was only increased. Permitted to retain the initial right of slaying the victim, the offerer was nevertheless dependent on the ministers of the altar for the rest. It was theirs to keep the flame of Israel's sacrifice ever burning and no one need hope to gain either purification or atonement, unless the sacrifice was brought to a worthy conclusion by the intervention of the priests. Not even the payment of vows, the presenting of thank offerings or the engaging in morning and evening prayers, could come up as a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord apart from the sacerdotal functions of the Aaronites. Thus forcibly was Israel reminded of the truth that the descendants or kinsmen of Moses were the custodiers and ministers of the ritual.

2. *The Function of Teaching*

"The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth" (Mal. ii. 7 ; cf. Lev. x. 11 ; Deut. xxxiii. 10). It is here, however, that the office of the priest is very sharply separated from the spiritual vocation of a prophet. The prophet, as a teacher, is the spokesman of God. It is his to utter in the ears of the covenant people a God-given message. He gazes into the mysteries of divine revelation, and turns round as the Lord's mouthpiece to speak to men what he has seen and heard. As a seer he goes into the inner sanctuary and *sees*, as a prophet he comes out and *declares*. The seer and the prophet together give us the

divine unveiling. The seeing and the speaking combined give us God. The teaching of the priest on the other hand is quite different. Instead of coming forth from the audience-chamber of Jehovah with fresh insight into the divine counsel, he is content to appear as the interpreter of an already existing law—the law of the Mosaic worship. The law which is based on the immemorial customs of antiquity is the sum and substance of his instructions, and he has no call to concern himself further with the ever-expanding purposes of Jehovah. In his teaching, no less than in his service, he is officially the minister of the altar; and beyond the due observance of the prescribed rites and ceremonies, he has no obligation to inquire further into the decisions or counsels of the Deity.

3. *The Judicial Function*

“They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law.” One signal instance of this judicial function has been found in the use of Urim and Thummim in the breastplate of the high priest. It is not easy to determine what these were; but whether they took the form of two stones, called “light” and “perfection,” which were put into the pocket of the Ephod and drawn out after the manner of the sacred lot; or consisted of the breastplate jewels themselves which glanced and sparkled in the light of divine revelation, there was believed to be, in either case, the reception of a divine decision, and the oracle itself came to be described as the “breastplate of judgment” (Ex. xxviii. 30). Even David, in the early days of the

monarchy, consulted this oracle with respect to the prosecution of his wars (1 Sam. xxiii. 9); but after his time it seems to have fallen more and more into disuse, until as suggested in Ezra ii. 63, it was altogether lost sight of after the Exile.

Another instance of the same judicial function is found in connection with the administration of justice. In ordinary circumstances this duty was laid upon the covenant people themselves. They were enjoined to put away the evil out of their midst, by bringing the accused party to special judges who were placed in all the gates (Deut. xvi. 18), that at the mouth of two or three witnesses the guilty one might forthwith be stoned to death (xvii. 2-7). But for other cases, a higher tribunal was provided (ver. 8), which was composed of priests and a civil judge, and these within the precincts of the central sanctuary pronounced on all matters that were too hard for the lower courts. Deut. xix. 16 is a case in point. If any man sought by false witness to bring the guilt of any crime on another, both men must appear before the priests and the judge, and if the higher court decided that the accuser was a false witness, they were to do to him as he thought to do to his brother, that those who remained might hear and fear, and henceforth commit no more any such evil in their midst.] 2

4. *The Practical Outcome*

The priestly functions, alas, instead of being the strength of the sacerdotal order were allowed to become their snare. External ceremonial, from its very nature, tends to become fixed and mechanical.

Representing as it does the traditional side of religion, it is apt to degenerate into a merely formal service, and so far from welcoming new aspects of truth like the expanding creed of the prophets, it is always in danger of resting in a barren performance as the adequate discharge of ministerial obligation. The priests, instead of standing forth as the pioneers of their faith, are content to reproduce the traditionalism of the past, bereft of the creative genius that originally gave it birth.

It is probably in this way that we are to understand the antagonism of the prophets who expose in so unmeasured terms the unspiritual attitude of the priests. "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Amos v. 21; Ps. l. 9; Isa. i. 15). Their polemic is not against the sacrificial system as such, but against the unspiritual formalism of the priesthood which would set ritual in the place of righteousness, and personal aggrandisement in the place of truth. "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Then shall the Lord be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon his altar" (Amos v. 24; Ps. li. 19).

But indeed the spiritual ideas of the prophets could not be realised under any ritual system.

The ritualism of the Old Testament must look forward to the spirituality of a new dispensation, when priestly law and priestly atonement would be no longer required (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). And thus when the New Testament fulfilment came, many of the priests themselves were able to break away from the trammels of traditionalism, and enter into the liberty of the Christian faith. During the night watches, it may be, when all the other worshippers had departed from the temple courts, they met and discussed the notable events that were daily taking place in Jerusalem. And so deeply did the claims of the new-movement affect their life and conduct, that the sacred historian was able to write that "the word of God increased: and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: *and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*" (Acts vi. 7).

5. THE DEDICATION OF THE PRIESTS.¹

The institution of the Levitical Priesthood was designed to represent a state of perfect *holiness*. They were brought in between an absolutely holy God, and an ideally holy people, "to bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts" (Ex. xxviii. 38). "Holiness unto the Lord," or, "Be ye holy for I am holy," was not simply the inscription on the mitre of the high priest. It was also the truth inscribed on every detail of the sacerdotal system, on the whole appearance of the priests and the various rites and ceremonies by which they were set apart to their sacred office. Ceremonial uncleanness (Lev. xxi. 1-2), social impurity

(ver. 7), and even physical blemishes (ver. 18) were all proscribed in the case of Aaron and his sons. "I, the Lord which sanctify you, am holy."

In connection with their dedication to the priestly office, we may note these three things.

I. *The Washing*

"Thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water" (Ex. xxix. 4). Compare what is said of the Egyptian priests in Herod. ii. 37. They shaved the head and body every other day, washed in cold water twice every day and twice every night, and wore robes of linen and shoes of papyrus, wool and leather being forbidden them. The sons of Aaron, like the high priest on the day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 4), were doubtless to bathe the whole body in water, and not simply the hands and feet as in the ordinary lustrations at the laver—a distinction which is full of spiritual significance in view of John xiii. 10. "He that is bathed (in his whole body, as the priests were bathed at their dedication) needeth not (for any subsequent service) save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." He that is once plunged in the laver of regeneration (Titus iii. 5), needs nothing after, save the daily and continual washing from stains which he may have contracted by the way. But in either case, both for initial acceptance and subsequent service, there is need of a solemn purification; for the washing of the body is always a symbol of the cleansing of the heart, and without *that*, no one, and least of all the man who would engage in holy service, is fit to

appear before God. Our God is a consuming fire. He is One whose moral perfection burns as a flame (Isa. x. 17); and none defiled can stand unabashed in His presence. Albeit the glory of the "Light of Israel" may admit of a twofold reference. It may be applied to the unapproachable majesty of Jehovah, or to the no less unparalleled splendour of His mercy. God is infinitely high, but He is also infinitely near: and both in moral elevation and in matchless loving-kindness He is the One whose name is holy, the One whose garment is the light, and in Whom is no darkness at all. The greatness of His majesty is the measure of His grace (*cf.* Isa. lvii. 15).

2. *The Robing*

Purification is followed by investiture. Aaron and his sons are set apart to the priesthood by being arrayed in the "holy garments" of their office. These garments consisted, for ordinary priests, of four articles of dress—breeches, coat, girdle and headtire (Ex. xxviii. 40-42); and being made throughout of fine white linen, with the exception of the girdle which was brodered with blue and purple and scarlet (xxxix. 29), they were well calculated to remind their wearers of the official, if not the essential holiness of their priesthood. But it was holiness, not in the negative sense of mere abstinence from evil, but positive dedication of the entire life to God which shewed itself in the performance of good. It was holiness in the sense of *service*.

An illustration of this truth is found in the

symbolism of the girdle. A common article of Eastern dress, it was used to bind the loose garments to the body, and to hold up the skirt of the long flowing robe when the wearer desired to engage in any kind of service. Compare Jesus girding himself with a towel and beginning to wash the disciples' feet ; or Peter's charge, "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another" (1 Pet. v. 5). For all true service is the service of love—the being girt, not about the loins, the badge of servitude, but about the *breasts* with a golden girdle, the assurance that He rules by love (Rev. i. 13). He loved us and gave Himself for us—that is the sceptre with which He subdues and rules the world. Shod with fire and breasted with love—these are the insignia of His priesthood. The negative holiness of purification has become the positive holiness of investiture.

3. *The Anointing*

"And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office : and their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood, throughout their generations" (Ex. xl. 15). According to Wilkinson a similar act of consecration was observed among the Egyptians : "As the Jewish lawgiver mentions the ceremony of pouring oil upon the head of the high priest *after* he had put on his entire dress, with the mitre and crown : the Egyptians represent the anointing of their priests and kings *after* they were attired in their full robes with the cap and crown upon their head."

The oil itself was a sacred unguent prepared by mixing four sweet-smelling spices with olive oil,—“flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and sweet cinnamon half so much, and sweet calamus two hundred and fifty, and cassia five hundred : . . . and thou shalt make it an holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer” (Ex. xxx. 23). So sacred, indeed, was the precious compound, that it was entirely withdrawn from common use : and no one was allowed to make any composition like it, under the penalty of being cut off from his people. According to Jewish tradition it was only the forehead of the common priests that was anointed at their dedication ; but in the unction of the high priest, the sacramental oil was poured upon the head (Ex. xxix. 7) in such abundance that it flowed down the beard, and even to the skirts of his garments, like the refreshing dew from Hermon distilling upon the mountains of Zion (Ps. cxxxiii.)

The idea suggested by the holy anointing oil was just the holiness of their priestly functions. Everything that the sacred perfume touched became fragrant with its sanctity. Aaron and his sons, the tabernacle and its vessels, the laver and its foot—were all infected with the same pervasive influence, and at once, as if by the spread of a moral contagion, they were included in the category of things sacred. Never again could they regard their functions as common or unclean. “Whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy” (Ex. xxx. 29). If the negative preparation of their purification has been followed by the positive symbolism of their

investiture—this, in turn, has been succeeded and crowned by the chrism of spiritual endowment.

For finally and chiefly, the priestly unction with the oil was a symbol of the divine Spirit who operates in the priestly office. It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. This is true of both kingship and priesthood—the kingship of David who was anointed by Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 13), and the priesthood of Aaron on whose head the holy anointing oil was first shed. These are the two sons of oil that stand by the Lord of the whole earth (Zech. iv. 14). And as Jesus Himself is the perfector of both, a similar divine anointing must descend upon Him. On the banks of the Jordan He must see the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power” (Acts x. 38). And the same truth has been written large for us. They who would be enrolled in the priesthood of Christian men, must cross the threshold by a similar act of dedication. They must be washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, arrayed in the garments of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, and anointed, as Jesus was, with the sacramental unction of the Holy One (*cf.* 1 John ii. 20). For the gift of life is not everything. After life comes service. After forgiveness comes the sacredness of the believer’s calling. And for the faithful discharge of life’s obligations, we need the holy anointing oil.

6. THE SIN-OFFERING.—At the dedication of the priests, as recorded in Ex. xxix., the threefold action of the washing, robing and anointing, was followed by the presentation of a threefold offering. One young bullock and two unblemished rams were taken and offered at the door of the tent of meeting, that Aaron and his sons might be installed into office, and minister unto the Lord in holy things. The bullock was a *sin*-offering (ver. 14), the first ram a *burnt*-offering (ver. 18), and the second, a ram of consecration (ver. 22), that is, a modified *thank*-offering; and as these are the three main classes into which Old Testament sacrifices have been divided, we may profitably assign one short section to each.

Sin-offerings were of various kinds according to the standing of the offerer. They might be a young bullock, a kid of the goats, a turtle dove or a young pigeon, or even a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour (Lev. v. 11). Any one of these was accepted as a legitimate sacrifice if the offerer's means did not suffice for a better. No one, on the ground of poverty or misfortune, was placed at any disadvantage at the altar of God. The bringing of two mites (Mark xii. 42) or the presenting of two turtle doves (Luke ii. 24) was yet to be acknowledged as one of the things which the King delighted to honour. He put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. Let no one be discouraged because of the meanness of his sacrifice. God seeks not yours but *you*.

The present case being that of a priest, a young bullock was used, its blood being daubed on the

horns of the altar, and the whole carcase burned without the camp according to the ritual of the sin-offering (Ex. xxix. 10-14).

I. *The Sin*

The Old Testament recognises different kinds of sin. It knows of sins of *ignorance*, sins that have been committed inadvertently or without premeditation, sins due to human frailty (Lev. iv. 2 ; Josh. xx. 3) : and sins of *rebellion*, sins that have been committed with the full intention of violating the law of God, sins with a "high hand" (Num. xv. 30). And just as there are degrees of guilt there are also degrees of punishment. Some sins may be cancelled by a compensation (Lev. iv. 27), but others can be expiated only by the death of the sinner (Deut. xvii. 12). Moses sinned and suffered, but he did not sin as Pharaoh. David transgressed the Covenant, but he did not transgress as Saul. All sin is culpable and all sin is punishable ; but some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others, and they are visited with "many stripes."

It is obvious that in the latter case the sin has been committed defiantly or "presumptuously" ; and for this, there is from the standpoint of the Law, no expiation possible—"that soul shall be cut off from his people." The legal sacrifices are not intended for unpardonable crimes like these. They are limited to offences of the former class, violations of the law that are committed "unwittingly," the so-called sins of ignorance : and they are not to be regarded as being wrought out on the same

moral plane as the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. They move on a much lower level than that. It does not follow, however, that they have thereby little or nothing to do with the question of atonement and the forgiveness of sins.* They may not have been designed to expiate the guilt of the braggart or the murderer, without on that account, being emptied of all moral significance and reduced to the level of a merely ceremonial transaction. The transgression which is committed "in ignorance" is not so colourless an offence as this theory tries to make out. It "extends to errors of infirmity, of rashness, we might say of levity." (Oehler). And indeed, Prof. Schultz admits as much when he says regarding the consecration of the priests: "The basis of it is the sin-offering. Secret sin and unworthiness must be expiated before there can be any question of filling a sacred office" (p. 402). *Secret sin and unworthiness!* Does anyone imagine that this is to be restricted to a purely ceremonial relationship? The question is its own answer. The sin in view has entered into the sphere of morality, and the sacrifice that is to restore the interrupted communion must be viewed in the light of that fact. It may not have the efficacy of New Testament atonement; but that moral ideas of sin and religious views of expiation are expressed in the ritual of the sin-offering cannot seriously be questioned.

2. *The Sacrifice*

The Sacrifice proper consists of two significant actions—the slaying of the victim and the

* Schultz's "Old Testament Theology," i. 383.

application of the blood. Both of these, however, are preceded by the laying on of hands, a detail which is full of significance for the doctrine of Old Testament sacrifice. It is a detail which may be interpreted from different points of view. From the side of *property*, e.g. it may be regarded as a simple act of dedication. The worshipper has not come to the altar of God empty-handed. He has brought an offering from his flock or herd, and as he lays his hand on the head of the victim, he expresses his intention of dedicating the whole animal to God. The gift which he has brought is a free-will offering to the deity. But from the side of *sin*, as already defined, the character of his action may be greatly modified. The offerer is now confronted by the fact of his own unworthiness, and as he stands abashed in the presence of the divine holiness, he may well long for a means of reconciliation ; a sacrifice, at once the vehicle of his repentance and the divinely accepted covering of his sin. And all this is provided for in the symbolism of the sin-offering. So that when he laid his hand on the head of the victim and set it apart as an expiatory sacrifice, he expressed his intention not simply to dedicate the whole animal to God, but also to sacrifice the pure life of the victim as a covering for his impure soul (*cf.* Ex. xii. 13, Lev. xvii. 11, Ps. xxxii. 1).

It is in this way that we can appreciate the subsequent disposal of the blood. It was brought as near to Jehovah as possible, smeared on the *horns* of the altar which significantly pointed heavenwards ; and on the day of atonement, taken and

sprinkled within the vail itself in the felt presence of the Eternal. The reason for this is not far to seek. The blood is the chief part of the animal. It is the vital element in which the life of the creature pulsates. It is God's "holy of holies in nature, within which the secret of life lies under lock and key." And therefore when it is brought and sprinkled upon the altar or the mercy-seat, the whole value of the sacrifice is interposed between God and man. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you ; it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." This is the robe in which every true worshipper must appear before Jehovah—a perfect emblem of the robe of righteousness described by the prophet (Isa. lxi. 10), or the white robes of the great multitude which have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14).

3. *The removal of the Carcase*

After the burning of the fat, which, like the blood, was regarded as an important seat of life, and wholly given over to the Deity (ver. 13), the rest of the victim with its skin and its dung, was to be burned with fire without the camp ; it was a sin-offering (ver. 14). It is commonly supposed that this was done because the victim was *unclean*, being laden with the sins of the guilty worshippers : but there is no evidence from the Levitical laws themselves that the sacrifice was so regarded by the people of Jehovah. Even in the case of the two goats on the day of atonement, it was not the goat of the sin-offering that was laden with the

people's sins, but the second or live goat on whose head the hands of Aaron had been laid, and which was sent away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness (Lev. xvi. 21). Instead of being viewed as unclean, the sin-offering was held in special honour and treated as a sacrifice of the first class which was entirely dedicated to Jehovah. It was *most holy* (Lev. vi. 25). It was too sacred to be left in contact with anything human, and therefore it was totally removed from common use. Its blood and fat were offered on the altar ; its flesh, in ordinary circumstances, was eaten by the priests who were Jehovah's representatives (ver. 26) ; and even when this could not be done, as when the priests offered a sacrifice for themselves, or represented Israel instead of Jehovah, the victim was not, on that account, allowed to revert to the offerer, but was wholly withdrawn from human contact, by being burned in a clean place without the camp.

The burning of the flesh indeed outside the camp was not so much a mark of obloquy, as a proof of superior sanctity. So that wherever we are to seek the origin of the "reproach" referred to in Heb. xiii. 13 it is not to be sought, at least in the first instance, in the ritual of the sin-offering. The higher moral plane on which the atoning work of Jesus is wrought out, must be traced in another and totally different direction. It is found (1) in the thought of *vicarious suffering* so strikingly foreshadowed in passages like Ex. xxxii. 32, and Isa. liii. ; and (2) in the thought of *judicial punishment* so sternly meted out to the rebel or malefactor, who because he had acted "presumptuously," was stoned

to death outside the city gates, or hanged upon a tree (Deut. xxi. 21-23). Jesus fulfils all the types and satisfies every spiritual longing. Like the Lord's suffering servant he connects himself indissolubly with the nation's fate, and by vicarious suffering, works out its redemption; but in so doing, he burdens himself with the nation's sins and suffers a felon's doom outside the city walls. He is SACRIFICE, SUFFERER and SATISFACTION all in one. His blood does atone for sin, but it is the blood of one who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. So that the symbolism of the laying on of hands has come to express at last, the deepest fact of all—the fact of vicarious substitution.

“ My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While as a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.

Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove ;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing his bleeding love.”

7. THE BURNT-OFFERING.—After the completion of the sin-offering which was burned with fire outside the camp, the first of the two rams was brought to the door of the tent of meeting, and presented as a holocaust or whole burnt-offering unto the Lord (Ex. xxix. 15-18). The Hebrew name, which is usually derived from a stem meaning *to ascend*, is probably to be referred to the burning of the sacred victim which was not only laid upon the altar, but made to ascend from the altar

in a column of fragrant smoke. This, at least, is the meaning of all fire-sacrifices, as seen in the early ritual of the Semites. The Gods were conceived as dwelling in the upper air, and the sacrifice was conveyed into their immediate presence by being sublimated into fragrant odour. What is true of fire-offerings in general, is specially true of one which is totally consumed upon the altar. It is a sacrifice which *ascends* to the very seat of the Deity—"a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord."

1. *Its basis in Atonement*

The holocaust may be described, generally, as a sacrifice of worship. If the sin-offering reminded the priests of the solemn facts of sin and atonement, the burnt-offering pointed them to the life of service and worship to which they were being set apart by the ritual of their installation. It was thus the sacrifice, *par excellence*, which belonged to the very nature of their office. Sin-offerings might, or might not be required for every stated occasion; but there never came a day in the worship of Israel when burnt-offerings were not to be offered as the embodiment of morning and evening prayer. The fire was never to be allowed to go out, it was a continual burnt-offering, and when this daily sacrifice ceased to be offered, the system itself came to an end (*cf.* Dan. viii. 11).

The distinction here drawn between the two kinds of sacrifice is one that may be accepted as valid, though there is one important consideration that seems to point otherwise. There are traces found

in the burnt-offering itself that appear to attribute to this priestly sacrifice a really expiatory character. It is offered at the door of the tent of meeting that the worshipper may be accepted before the Lord. "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him *to make atonement for him*" (Lev. i. 4). This however, does not mean that the two sacrifices are therefore practically identical. The fact that the young bullock and the unblemished ram were brought together in the same ceremony is conclusive proof to the contrary. Their juxtaposition at the dedication of the priests, and the very different manipulation of the blood and flesh, are sufficient to show that, with respect to the element of expiation, the burnt-offering is quite distinct from that of the sin-offering.

Its atoning efficacy may be fully explained from the general standpoint of sacrifice. A certain piacular force is to be ascribed to all sacrifices. In the very nature of a sacrificial system, the idea is expressed that if man bring, and God accept, a sacrificial victim, the memory of any estrangement which may have existed between them will thereby be entirely wiped out. The offering, as thus presented, will have conciliated the favour, if it has not appeased the jealousy of an offended deity. But if this be true anywhere it is certainly true of a sacrificial system which is based on a covenant contract between God and man. The whole conception of a covenant is that Jehovah has drawn near to the people in grace. It is not so much an agreement between equals, as the ratification of God's purposes of mercy towards those who are un-

deserving. And therefore, if they are permitted to enter into covenant relation at all, it is not because they are entitled to do so, as a question of equal rights, but simply because they are privileged in God's good pleasure to stand on the broad platform of atonement and reconciliation. It is not only positive breaches of the covenant that have to be repaired and atoned for by a series of sin-offerings, but this broad fact of reconciliation, embodied in the very idea of the covenant, must also be set forth before the people; and as the daily burnt-offering is the ever present sign of this deep-ground work in redemption, it is rightly described, at least from this general standpoint, as having a basis in atonement.

2. *Its embodiment in worship*

As already indicated, Aaron and his sons were being set apart to a life of service and worship. They were the real burnt-offering to be brought and dedicated to Jehovah. Having been accepted on the basis of the sin-offering, they were to take the Covenant blessings conferred upon them, and send them back to Him who bestowed the gifts, in a stream of ceaseless adoration. According to John iv. 14, this is the divine purpose in all spiritual gifts. The living water when once received is not to remain absorbed in the individual life; it is to flow back to the One who sent it forth, as a fountain of water springing up "*unto eternal life.*" Divine blessing is really a call to service and reverential devotion. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

(a) But this implies, in the first place, that the worship is to be given *to Jehovah alone.* The

whole ram, *e.g.* was to be laid upon the altar and dedicated unto Jehovah. Neither the blood nor the flesh was to be used for any other purpose. The entire victim was consumed in sacrificial flame and came up as a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord. No doubt in Lev. vii. 8. the skin of the holocaust is handed over to the officiating minister as a part of the priest's fee; but this is a case where the animal's hide is merely an article of commercial value, and is not considered, in the view of Israel, as of any sacred significance. Usually the victim is flayed and the skin given to the priest, or retained by the offerer: * but the sacrifice as thus washed and dressed is still viewed as the entire animal, and is therefore brought and laid on the altar-fire, as a whole burnt-offering unto the Lord.

And in a similar manner with the offering of divine worship. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv. 10; Ex. xx. 3). Not even at the feet of an angel are we to fall down and worship (Rev. xxii. 8). Every voice that speaks from the altar says, "Worship God."

(b) It implies further the dedication of *all our time*. The life of worship is not to be confined to the hallowed hours of the Sabbath, even though a double burnt-offering was expressly appointed for that day (Num. xxviii. 9-10): and still less is it to be restricted to those special seasons when as in the Jewish Passover, etc., an even greater holocaust was presented at God's altar (ver. 11. ff.): it is to

* Robertson Smith's "Semites," p. 434.

be extended to every day of the week and every hour of each day, as when the sacrificial flame that burned on the brazen altar was never to be allowed to go out (Lev. vi. 13). Never a day dawned, but the priest might have been seen arranging the morning sacrifice in the outer court: and never the twilight fell, but the watcher astir in the Camp might have beheld the smoke of the evening oblation rising all through the night. It represented the unbroken course of the adoration of Jehovah which ought to be rising continually from human hearts.

3. *Its fulfilment in New Testament Self-surrender*

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. xii. 1). This also is a picture of worship or priestly service. The Apostle is passing from doctrine to practice—from faith to works: but as he does so, he indicates the bridge by which the passage is to be made—he summons his brethren to a definite act of complete self-surrender. If the work is to be real, the workman must be consecrated. From the closet to the workshop, and from the altar to the battle, must ever be the royal road to success. Be exhorted, therefore, in faith to draw near to the Altar of God. Be a worshipper, an offerer, a *priest*. But unlike the animal sacrifices of the Law which were presented merely to be *slain*, bring and lay on this altar a sacrifice which is *living*. A living sacrifice and yet a real victim—a victim dying to self and sin, but in dying, becoming the participant

of a higher and purer life. Present your *body*. For alas, how possible it is to trust one's soul to God, and yet to keep back the body—to believe in Christ for salvation and yet to fall short of this supreme act of self-surrender. But anything short of this, is short of the Apostle's exhortation, that the true worshipper, the holy priest, should consecrate his body.

And in view of the "mercies of God" this is the only true, the only "reasonable service." Not to give the soul alone, and not alone the body : but to come, in the language of the Old Testament holocaust, and dedicate the *whole man* to God. The keenness of the intellect, the warmth of the affections, the decision of the will, and the alacrity of the life—let this be the living sacrifice that you bring and lay on God's altar, and fear not but that it will come up before the Lord as a sweet smelling savour. It is offered through the blood of the everlasting covenant—it is a burnt-offering.

8. THE THANK-OFFERING.—The three offerings at the installation of the priests form a distinct gradation. (Ex. xxix. 1-37) "The basis of all is the Sin-offering. Then, as already pardoned, the priest presents a burnt-offering in token of his loyal homage to the great God of Israel. Only then, when this duty is discharged can he give expression to his gratitude for the high and honourable office God has graciously bestowed upon him. The thank-offering is presented, and the community of worshippers gathers to a joyous meal round the table now dedicated to God."*

* Schultz, vol i., 402.

been followed by worship, this, in turn, is followed by the giving of thanks.

1. *The Thanksgiving*

This is not to be confused, either with the happy abandon of a child, or the joyous character of antique religion. Robertson Smith has dwelt at considerable length on what he believes to have been the joyous character of antique religion. He will not admit, in any sense, the dictum of Renan, that religion in its origin was the child of terror.* It was not until the eighth century, B.C., when the smaller Semitic states went down before the dread Assyrian invasion, that magical superstitions founded on mere terror invaded the sphere of tribal or national faith. Then, indeed, a sombre and sanguinary earnestness took possession of the popular mind, and men were ready to devote to heaven all that the human heart holds dearest—to give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul (Micah vi. 7). But it had not been so from the beginning. The tribal god, among the primitive Semites, was really a divine kinsman; and unless they had offended him all the more grievously, they were fully assured that he would neither be over severe nor unduly exacting. The long-suffering tolerance which they were ready to extend to one another was also ascribed to the Deity, and nothing was further from their thoughts than the idea that their religion was the offspring of fear.

But mark the contrast between this naïve confi-

* But see Appendix.

dence in the presence of the Deity, and the august sacrifice of thanksgiving to which the worshipper is called in the higher faith of Israel. The one is the fruit of ignorance of or indifference to sin, the other is the blessed consciousness of sin forgiven. The one is the abandon of a child which has not as yet felt the pain of moral evil, the other is the rapture of a strong man who feels that the burden of guilt is already lifted. And this is at once the proof of faith and the pledge of a genuine morality. Undue familiarity in the things of religion is not, and cannot be, a sound basis on which to build up a strong and vigorous moral life. But where true reverence and gratitude are combined in the presence of the holy One of Israel, the foundation is laid for that life of piety and righteousness—piety for the sake of which all other things exist, and righteousness the alone essential thing in the world. The true thanksgiving, in other words, must show itself in service. The life, and not the voice, is the true vehicle of praise—a truth that may help to explain Ex. xxix. 20, where, in addition to the ordinary ritual at other thank-offerings, the blood is to be put on the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe of Aaron and his sons. “The ear, because the priest must at all times hearken to the holy voice of God ; the hand, because he must execute God’s commands ; and the foot, because he must walk rightly and holily” (Oehler).

It is for this reason that the second ram has received the appropriate designation, *a ram of consecration*. A life given up to God in thanks-

giving is pre-eminently a consecrated life, a life called and set apart to Jehovah for a high and holy service. Consecration becomes a synonym for installation. And thus we have the Hebrew term *Millu'im*—*filling*. It indicates a filling of the hand, not so much with any particular gift, as with the rights and reins of office, *i.e.* authorisation. So that the paradox is at length complete, that the truest giving to God is a taking from God (*cf.* Ps. cxvi. 12, 13). The highest form of thanksgiving is to enter upon a higher form of service.

2. *The Feast*

The feeling of thankfulness and the pleasures of the banquet are so commonly associated in the popular mind, that it is befitting, when the worshipper comes to rejoice before his God, he should bring and lay on the altar-table the materials necessary for the setting forth of a sacrificial meal. The significance of this meal cannot be overestimated. According to Professor Smith, it is at once the key to the whole subject of sacrifice and the basis of all Semitic covenants. When the two parties have eaten of the same victim and thus become participants in a common life, a living bond of union is immediately formed between them, and they are no longer enemies, but brothers.* Be this as it may—whether the thought of sacramental communion be taken as the starting-point of man's approach to God, or simply as its natural goal, it cannot be questioned that the conception as thus defined, has had a very large share indeed

* See below, sect. 16.

in suggesting the forms and shaping the terms of the Old Testament ritual.

In the thank-offering, *e.g.* the worshipper, no less than the Deity, receives his appropriate share. The two parties become partakers at a common table. And just as Abraham divided his sacrifice into two equal parts, and set the one over against the other (Gen. xv. 10), or Moses divided the blood of the covenant and poured the one half on the altar, *i.e.* surrendered it to God, and sprinkled the other half on the people (Ex. xxiv. 6, 8); so here the sacrificial flesh and bread are separated into different portions, and solemnly appropriated by the two parties who have entered into communion.

Take, for instance, the waving and the heaving. Certain portions of the victim are waved to and fro, or heaved up and down, before the Lord—a symbolical action to indicate the respective destinations to which they are being set apart. In ordinary thank-offerings the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder are given to the priest (Lev. vii. 34); but they are given from different sides. The one is the portion of the offerer who hands it over to the priest as a part of his fee; the other is the portion of Jehovah, who, as in the symbolism of the heaving, at once accepts and resigns it in favour of His servant. Unlike the sacrificial blood and fat which are entirely removed from human contact, the breast and the shoulder are both bestowed on the officiating priest “as a due forever from the children of Israel.” The remainder of the flesh is retained by the offerer, who in company with his friends and other guests, rejoices and feasts, without stint, in the presence of Jehovah.

The ram of consecration being the offering of the priests themselves, the details of the ritual were slightly modified. Moses received the portion which afterwards belonged to the priests (ver. 26), and the sacrificial meal was restricted to Aaron and his sons (ver. 33). But otherwise it stood in the same class with thank-offerings in general, and gave suitable expression to the feeling of gratitude which animated the heart of the offerer when he appeared before his God. It began with an act of consecration, or the giving of the whole life to Jehovah, and ended in the fellowship of a joyous repast—a feast of sacramental communion.

3. *The New Testament fulfilment*

“Through him, then, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. xiii. 15, 16). In this significant parallel the same three points are emphasised.

(1) The thank-offering of *the lips*. The believer is to draw nigh to God and offer as his sacrifice of praise “the fruit of the lips” (*cf.* Hos. xiv. 2). Both at the altar of God and before the tribunal of the world, he is to make confession to His name: for “them that honour Me I will honour.” And he is to do this “continually.” Not limiting his expressions of gratitude to set times and circumstances but seeking to cherish a constant feeling of thankfulness to God, that, as God’s unspeakable gift is far above all praise, he may be

ready to shew forth the divine excellencies, and bear a clear and emphatic testimony before the world.

(2) The thank-offering of *the life*. "To do good and to communicate forget not." The testimony of the lips must be backed up by acts of practical beneficence. To glorify God in our songs of praise is a great deal, but to glorify Him by finishing the *work* the Father has given us to do is a great deal more (*cf.* John xvii. 4). This is a form of thanksgiving that no one will be able to gainsay. The labour of head and heart and hand has been laid on the altar.

(3) The thank-offering of *sacramental communion*. "To do good and to communicate forget not." To do good and to impart of one's substance for the sake of the poor and the afflicted—that is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Was it not so in the case of the Old Testament thank-offering? It was first and foremost a *love feast*, at which, besides the members of the family, the Levites, the stranger, and the needy were to find refreshment (Deut. xvi. 11). And can it be that such open-handed liberality is accepted in heaven as a divinely approved thank-offering? Is the festive board that is spread for the poor and needy a sacrificial meal, a feast, a sacrament? Yes, a sacrament where the Highest of All may Himself enter as a guest, and, taking His seat at the table, say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." He who provides for the poor is providing for the Lord of the poor. "With such sacrifices God is well pleased."

9. THE HIGH PRIEST. — According to the modern view of Israel's institutions, the high priest as described in the Law was a personage not to be thought of as possible before the Exile. His spiritual dignity was such, that while sceptre and sword were lacking to him, he stood at the top of the priesthood as a kind of Roman pontiff, and gathered up in himself all the revenues and honours that used to be paid to the Hebrew monarch. Clearly a rank like this pointed to a time when the nation had been deprived of its political existence and survived merely as a Church or religious community, *i.e.* post-exilian Judaism. For under the suzerainty of the Persians or Greeks the material influence of the priests was greater than ever before. The Aaronites, or rather the Zadokites were the only hereditary aristocracy. And when the high priest stood at the altar in all the splendour of his priestly attire, little marvel if the Jewish captives forgot for a moment their vassalage and knew that the day of their redemption was near.*

On the other hand, when this whole system came to be traced back to the age and activity of Moses, the priestly narrator had sufficient historical testimony to justify his action. He possessed a nucleus of fact even with respect to the office of the high priest. Hilkiash who discovered the book of the law in 621 B.C., and Jehoiada who assisted King Jehoash in repairing the breaches of the temple, were both high priests (2 Kings xii. 10, xxii. 8): and while it may be

* See article "Priest," *Ency. Brit.*

admitted that their ministerial status was simply that of first among equals, there was still sufficient in the office as thus defined to justify the historical setting of the Priestly code. There were Aaronites long before the reformation under Josiah, and there were high priests centuries before the restoration under Ezra.

Be this as it may, we turn under the present section to the symbolism of their investiture. They wore

1. *The ordinary dress of the priests*

Like the priesthood generally, the high priest was meant to represent a state of perfect holiness. He concentrated in his own person the official sanctity by which Israel, the holy nation, was represented and accepted before Jehovah. And therefore, as the first part of his priestly vestments, he must be dressed in the breeches, coat and girdle of the ordinary priests. Fine linen, pure and white, must be at the basis of everything. Not without the white coat of "chequer-work" (R.V.), which like the seamless garment of the Crucified, was woven from the top throughout, could the chief priest who was higher than his brethren appear before Jehovah. Without the garments and ornaments of his order, he was simply a private individual. Consequently he is threatened with the direst penalty, if he should appear before the Lord without them (Ex. xxviii. 35).

2. *The robes of glory and beauty*

Above the coat of chequer-work which was symbolical of purity, the high priest wore the

brighter and more variegated robes peculiar to his office. These were the robes of glory and beauty enumerated in Ex. xxix. 5, 6. They included—

(1) The robe of the ephod with its fringe of golden bells (Ex. xxviii. 31-35). This was a close-fitting upper dress “all of blue”—with armholes instead of sleeves, and reaching only a little below the knees, it allowed the lower part of the skirt, as also the white sleeves of the chequered coat to be seen. Its main distinction was the rich ornamental fringe along its under hem, which was trimmed with golden bells and pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet. According to the Rabbis, these bells were seventy-two in number, and as they made a tinkling sound when the high priest was engaged in holy service, they were a signal that the ministry of reconciliation was being effected. The people assembling in the outer court could hear the sound of the bells, and follow the movements of the high priest with their thoughts and prayers.

(2) The ephod itself with its jewels on shoulder and breast (Ex. xxviii. 6-30). This was another part of the priestly dress, not unlike a pinafore in shape with the ends tied round the waist in the form of a girdle—“the cunningly-woven band” of the ephod (Ex. xxxix. 5). It did not reach so far down as the blue robe already mentioned, so that the ornamental fringe of bells and pomegranates was left fully exposed. In its material it was woven of finely-dyed yarn, and richly inwrought with gold cut into wires—“the work of the cunning workman”: while in ornamentation it had shoulder-pieces and a breast-plate beautifully set with precious stones, on which

were engraved "like the engravings of a signet" the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. In this way the high priest was reminded of the truth that he was the bearer and representative of the whole people. On his shoulders the place of strength, and over his heart the symbol of love, he officially carried the burden of the congregation before the Lord. Patiently and lovingly, like our Great High Priest, he had drawn near to intercede on behalf of others.

"He stands in heaven, our Great High Priest,
And bears our names upon His breast."

(3) The mitre with its golden crown (Ex. xxviii. 36-38). The mitre or covering for the head was a kind of turban made of fine linen, like the goodly bonnets of the priests (Ex. xxxix. 28). It bore on its front a gold plate fastened with a lace of blue, and bearing the inscription in Hebrew characters—"Holy to the Lord." And as every article of the priestly dress uttered the sentiment of this inscription, it formed an appropriate crown or finish to the high priest's attire. It was the "holy crown" or diadem that marked the completion of his investiture. And, beautiful as the head-dress may have been as the crowning article of attire, it was more beautiful in its symbolism. It spoke of a holiness that will never cease to pervade and influence human life until, as it is expressed in the idealism of a later prophet, "Holiness unto the Lord" will be engraved even on the bells of the horses (Zech. xiv. 20).

3. *The Holy Garments of Atonement*

A special suit of priestly attire was prescribed for the high priest on the annual day of atone-

ment (Lev. xvi. 4). It was made entirely of white linen.

Arrayed in that dress of spotless whiteness, he was allowed to enter into the holiest of all, and bow in awe before the mercy-seat. On this day of a nation's humiliation he symbolised as never before the highest degree of moral purity: and as such, his white raiment might well appear as a perfect type of the robes that have been made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14). For if the tenth day of the seventh month was the great day of a people's sanctity, it was also the great day of atonement; and the one was the hope and pledge of the other. It was only on the basis of expiation, that the attainment of holiness was a possibility. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). Paradoxical though it seem, the red of sin is expunged by the red of sacrifice, and the white of holiness is the result. Then, but not till then, are we privileged to rest in the jubilant refrain of the prophet. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 10). The filthy garments have been laid aside for the rich apparel of the King (Zech. iii. 1-5).

PART II

THE SANCTUARY

10. THE TABERNACLE AS A WHOLE.—Whether we think of the spirituality of God or of the redemption of Israel, a greater word was never spoken than this—"Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8). God is spiritual, and, as such, He cannot be represented by an image. No idol can stand in the place of deity, as in the adytum of an Egyptian Temple.* And yet He who forbids the image accepts the shrine. He who dwells in light, unapproachable and invisible, elects to take up His abode among the children of men.

The sanctuary, however, has been anticipated by the purposes of redemption. Israel is a redeemed people. They have been chosen of God as His purchased possession, and delivered out of the

* When Pompey entered the Holy of Holies in 63 B.C., he found "an empty seat" within. "He drew the veil aside. Nothing more forcibly shews the immense superiority of the Jewish worship to any which then existed on the earth, than the shock of surprise occasioned by this one glimpse of the exterior world into that unknown and mysterious chamber. 'There was nothing.' Instead of all the fabled figures of which he had heard or read, he found only a shrine, as it seemed to him, without a God, because a Sanctuary without an image."—STANLEY, *The Jewish Church*, vol. iii. p. 405, ed. 1876.

toils of the oppressor by a mighty hand and outstretched arm ; and it is on the basis of that great deliverance that the divine promise is once and again renewed, "I will dwell among them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." Within Old Testament limitations the teaching of the apostle has already found a suitable expression that forgiveness is followed by indwelling, revelation by communion, and redemption by the raising of an holy temple in the Lord (*cf.* Ephes. i. 7 with ii. 22).

1. *The Prototype*

The original Semitic sanctuary was simply a tent of curtains formed on the model of a shepherd's tent (*cf.* Ex. xxxiii. 7 ; 2 Sam. vii. 6). Surrounded by an open, uncovered court where anyone might stand, a nomad's tent consisted of two other divisions—first, a tolerably large room, in which were kept various household articles, and into which the master's friends were freely admitted ; then a smaller apartment, which was the home proper, and into which no stranger dared enter. Being a covered structure, it was lighted, not by the sun, but by a lamp, and thus formed the pattern for the sacred tent of the Hebrews. For here also the arrangement of courts was precisely similar. The first division was under the open sky ; the second was veiled, but still lighted ; while the third was both veiled and dark—all the courts and articles of furniture corresponding exactly with the prototype.

To grasp the meaning of this structure, it is not necessary to give a literal interpretation to Ex. xxv.

40, and say that the earthly tabernacle was a copy of a celestial original, or even to conclude with Josephus and others that the tent of curtains was a picture of the universe generally—the outer court being compared to the earth and sea, and the other two rooms corresponding to “the heavens” and “the heaven of heavens” so frequently mentioned together in holy Scripture. It is sufficient to recall the truth so forcibly expressed already by the Levitical priesthood that the basal conception of Old Testament revelation is the doctrine of the divine *holiness*. God is infinitely high, but He is also infinitely near, and both in moral sublimity and in matchless lovingkindness He is the One whose name is holy. It is this same twofold aspect of the divine sanctity that is so vividly set before us in the plan and structure of the Jewish Tabernacle. God has drawn infinitely near! Unlike the terrible god of the Semites, who annihilated what came near him and killed what was dedicated to him, Jehovah, the God of their redemption, has graciously come to tabernacle in their midst. If they, a pilgrim people, are constrained to sojourn in tents, He, their covenant God, will do likewise. He will be a God *at hand* (Jer. xxiii. 23). } Nothing more tender or more spiritual is said of Him on the basis of Old Testament religion. Meanwhile God is nothing if He is not holy. He is near by reason of His mercy, but He is also far removed by reason of His holiness. } He dwells in the thick darkness of the thrice holy place (*cf.* 1 Kings viii. 12), and no one dare approach the sacred shrine save through the prescribed means of atonement. } The One who said

to Moses, "I am the God of thy father" (Ex. iii. 16)—thus placing himself in the closest family relation to the humble shepherd,—immediately doubles back upon Himself and retreats away back into His eternity of being, as He utters the name, "I am that I am" or "I will be that I will be" (ver. 14). Let each one put off the shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stands is holy ground. The fire that spares the frailest twig will yet consume Sinai. The pilgrim God of the Hebrews is the Maker of heaven and earth.

2. *The Completed Structure*

Approaching the tabernacle from the east, the priestly narrator describes it as an oblong structure, 150 feet long by 75 feet in breadth (Ex. xxvii. 9-19). Seen from the outside it is simply an enclosure of pillars and white linen curtains, with the whole enclosed area open to the sky. Right in the middle of the eastern side is the entrance, 30 feet broad, with a beautiful hanging of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer. All the curtains are suspended on hooks and fillets of silver, and the pillars firmly set in sockets of brass.

Passing through this parti-coloured doorway, we find ourselves confronted by the first two articles of furniture standing in the open air. These are the brazen altar, where man begins his search for God by means of sacrificial offerings, and the brazen laver, some distance behind it, where the priests wash their hands and feet before engaging in the duties of their office. Beyond both of these

is the sanctuary proper—a frame of gilded boards set in sockets of silver, and overhung by a fourfold covering of fine twined linen, goats' hair, &c., the under-cover being also embroidered with the figures of Cherubim, the work of the cunning workmen. Drawing aside the beautifully woven screen that covers the entrance to this sacred tent, we find ourselves in the holy place, which was dedicated to the daily service of the priesthood. On the left hand, towards the south, is the golden candlestick with its seven lamps, giving a plentiful supply of light to the whole apartment, while on the right, towards the north, is the table of shewbread, with its twelve loaves of unleavened bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. In the middle, before the curtain leading to the most holy place, is the golden altar, where the priests, morning and evening, burn the purest and richest spices as a "perpetual incense" before the Lord. Going into the holiest of all on the great day of atonement, the high priest gazed on two other articles of furniture that had the most sacred import for believing Jews—the Ark of the Covenant, containing the two tables of the law, and the bright-winged Cherubim above the Mercy-seat, with their faces turned towards each other, and between whom the very presence of the deity was supposed to reside. These were all overlaid with gold within and without, and were well fitted to inspire the devout worshipper with a due sense of the greatness and majesty of Jehovah. For the disposal of the metals, no less than the threefold arrangement of the courts, has prepared us for the truth so deeply inscribed on every part

of the Mosaic ritual—that the essential element in Old Testament religion is not Semitic monotheism, but the knowledge of the *holiness* of God.

It may help to stamp the teaching of this symbolism if we indicate, in a sentence, what one may describe as the parable of the acacia wood. The Arabic acacia, or shittim wood, had to be taken from the desert and set in the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and there are at least three well-marked stages in its translation :—(1) It had to be felled. Rooted to its native soil by years of growth and tempest, it had to be cut down by the carpenter's axe, and brought into the Israelitish camp to be prepared for its destination. Like Israel itself, it might have said, "They found me in a desert land" (Deut. xxxii. 10). (2) Then, having been shaped by saw and plane into the requisite size and smoothness, it was tenoned and set in a socket of silver, the silver being derived from the half-shekel or redemption-money of the sanctuary, so that, like Israel again, it might have sung—

"Here let my praise to God abound,
I stand upon redemption ground."

(3) Finally, the board of shittim wood was gilded or overlaid with pure gold and placed in the audience-chamber of the King. Brass, silver, gold : perhaps judgment, redemption, glory. The cloud had rested upon the completed structure, and the divine glory filled it. Blessed are all they who can close the parable saying, "He kept me as the apple of His eye."

11. THE BRAZEN ALTAR. — Man begins his

search for God by means of sacrificial offerings. On the threshold of the Mosaic sanctuary, as on the threshold of human history (Gen. iv. 3-4), he is found building an altar unto the Lord his God, and seeking by the way of sacrifice to propitiate the Deity. What is the meaning of this? And to what purpose is the altar?

1. *The Semitic Original*

The brazen altar, as set up in the outer court, combined two sacrificial actions that were originally quite distinct. These were the *sprinkling* of the blood, and the *burning* of the victim. The altar was at once a pillar and a pyre—an idol and a hearth—and in order to see how comparatively late this form of the altar may be, we must refer to its origin and early history in the primitive ritual of the Semites. The most ancient form of the Semitic altar was undoubtedly a cairn or pillar. Compare Jacob raising a heap of stones in his covenant contract with Laban (Gen. xxxi. 46), or Saul using a single great stone after the battle of Michmash, that the people might come and slay their booty beside it, and not eat the flesh with the blood (1 Sam. xiv. 32). Early man desired to bring his sacrifice as near to the deity as possible, and as the warm blood of the victim was regarded as its inner vitality or soul (Gen. ix. 4, Lev. xvii. 11), he imagined that he had gained his object, when, having erected a large stone as a rough embodiment of the deity, he drew near to this primitive idol, and daubed it with sacrificial blood. The patriarch Jacob used oil instead of blood when he erected a

pillar at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 18), but having set it up for a similar purpose—as an embodiment or dwelling-place of the divine being (verse 22)—he smeared it with oil or sacrificial fat, after the usual Semitic custom. In the elementary conceptions of aboriginal man, this was the first stage in the ritual—the altar was a cairn or pillar.

In course of time, a second stage was reached, when the broadening of man's mind, and the development of religion had prepared him for a more spiritual view of the Godhead. As his conception of the gods grew less crude and materialistic, the rites and ceremonies by which he gave expression to their worship, had to be cast in other moulds and modified and expanded accordingly. In fine, when he came to regard them, not as mere powers residing in a stone, but as subtler beings who lived and moved in the upper air, the means chosen for bringing the sacrifice into contact with them had to be largely remodelled from that point of view. The sprinkling of the blood had to be supplemented by the burning of the victim. If the rude conception that the gods would eat flesh or drink blood, (Ps. l. 13), had to be eliminated and discarded, the other thought that the burning flesh might ascend as a column of fragrant smoke and find its way into the very presence of the deity was not so difficult to harmonise with their expanding creed. It was one that might prepare the way for the highest worship of all—when the incense of prayer and even the grace of almsgiving would come up as a memorial before the Lord (Acts x. 4). And thus the acceptance of Noah's sacrifice immediately

after the flood, or the ram of consecration at the dedication of the priests, is expressed in the familiar words of Holy Scripture, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour": it was "an offering made by fire unto the Lord." This was the second stage in the growth of Semitic ritual: the altar had become a hearth.

And now in the brazen altar of the Mosaic cultus the two operations are combined. It is both a pillar and a hearth. Thou shalt both sprinkle and burn (Ex. xxix. 12, 13). But as if to emphasise the truth already mentioned that the sprinkling and the burning were originally quite distinct, and that the pillar and the hearth were really two different objects, these words were immediately added that the flesh of the bullock and his skin and his dung were to be burned with fire outside the camp—it was a sin-offering. The sprinkling of the blood was to be applied to the horns of the altar—that was the pillar; and the burning of the victim to be effected without the camp, that was the pyre: but for all ordinary sacrifices the two operations and the two objects were combined, the brazen altar was both pillar and pyre.

2. The Jewish Type

In accordance with its Semitic origin the Mosaic altar was to be a simple mound of earth or heap of unhewn stones on which no tool was to be lifted up (Ex. xx. 24-25). This raised mound was the altar proper: but when we come to Ex. xxvii. 1-8, we find it incased in a hollow-frame of acacia boards overlaid with brass, which stood four-square

within the entrance of the tabernacle. In dimensions it was $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet square by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, so that to meet the convenience of the officiating priests it had to be approached, not by steps, but by an incline of earth, according to the restriction in Ex. xx. 26. Staves also and rings for its transit across the desert, a brass grating and various vessels for the due performance of the ritual, were all carefully specified by the priestly narrator: as were also the four horns of the altar, "in the four corners thereof," which formed so suitable a finish to the whole structure. It is not without significance, too, that in Solomon's temple the staves do not appear—a touching reminder that the altar had now reached its rest (2 Chron. iv. 1): while in the ideal temple of Ezekiel, the steps which were prohibited in Exodus, are fitly re-introduced, as if to teach the important truth, that in the great temple of the future the virtue of the divine sacrifice will be so real that the nakedness of God's priests will be forever covered (Ezek. xliii. 13-17).

But the interest of the brazen altar culminates in the horns. The binding of the victim to these horns (Ps. cxviii. 27), the claiming of the right of asylum, when the refugee had laid hold on the sacred emblems (1 Kings i. 50), the sprinkling of sacrificial blood, as if to bring the sacrifice to a worthy conclusion, and finally, the destroying of the altar itself by breaking off these mystic symbols (Amos iii. 14), all this reveals the profound awe with which the altar horns were regarded, and may well whet the desire of Bible students to know something of their origin and history. In all proba-

bility they are to be referred to the same circle of ideas as the setting up of pillars to represent the deity, and the smearing of these primitive idols with the sacrificial blood or fat. In this way the life of the victim was brought into actual contact with the sacred stone. But for the same reason the altar-idol was sometimes draped with other parts of the animal—such as the crania and horns which were common symbols on Greek altars, and even the entire skin of the victim, which was used both for the draping of the idol and for the dressing of the worshippers. The horns on the altar were thus a late relic of the actual heads of the victims, but these, in turn, were a real representation of the gods. For in the last resort, the belief in question takes us back to the stage of totemism—a time when the god, the worshippers, and the victim were all regarded as members of the same kin. The drapery no less than the idol was instinct with divine vitality. The horns no less than the altar were the embodiment of divine sanctity. So that with such an origin in the well-nigh forgotten ritual of the past, we may easily imagine that in the view of Israel the horns were something more than mere appendages or ornaments of the altar, they had a special significance of their own. }

3. *The Christian Fulfilment*

We can only refer in a sentence to the greatness of the New Testament fulfilment. If man begins his search for God by means of sacrificial offerings, if he comes to an idol-altar where the divine and human are most strangely united, where is this

union so wondrously realised as in the life and work of the great Antitype, where does man meet his God if not in the person and mission of the Crucified? There is one place where the victim has been bound, one hallowed spot where the blood has been shed, one sure retreat where the hunted soul may claim the right of asylum, viz.: Golgotha, 'the place of a skull.' This is the fulness of the New Testament altar, the pillar has become a pyre, and the pyre, in turn, has become *a cross*.*

[12. THE LAVER.—Illustrations of the law and ritual of Israel may be found both on the plains of Babylonia and in the valley of the Nile. Centuries before the age of Moses, as we are informed in Sayce's "Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments," the Babylonians had sacrifices and institutions, festivals and fasts which offer many points of contact with the ordinances of the Mosaic law. They knew of "peace-offerings" and of "heave-offerings," of the dedication of the first-born, and of sacrifices for sin. The gods were carried about in "ships," and these like the Hebrew ark, were borne on men's shoulders by means of staves.† In front of the god stood a table on which shewbread was laid: and in the outer courts of the temples were large lavers called "seas," like the sea of Solomon's temple, in which the worshippers were required to cleanse themselves. Like the Egyptian priesthood

* Cf. Mr Addis' remark on Heb. xiii. 10 in the "Ency. Biblica."—"The altar is, of course, not material but spiritual; it is the cross on which Christ offered Himself."—Art. "Altar," 14.

† In Egypt "no festal procession could be sculptured or painted without them."—CHEYNE in "Ency. Biblica," col. 307.

as described by Herodotus, the ministers of the ritual had to exemplify in their own persons the importance of ceremonial cleanliness as a symbol of moral purity. So that the Hebrew leader was simply following the immemorial customs of antiquity when he fashioned and set up between the altar and the sanctuary a brazen laver or "sea" for the purifying of the priests. /

This, of course, does not mean that the Mosaic institutions have been bereft of all claim to originality. He who can subdue nature to the ways of His Kingdom, and use ancient customs as earthen vessels for the holding of spiritual treasure, is greater than the one who, being baffled by the obduracy of either nature or man, is compelled to devise new agents and instruments for the effecting of his purposes.

1. Its Shape

An early Babylonian hymn describes the construction of a laver. It was made of bronze, and rested on twelve oxen, and was intended for the ablutions of the priests and the vessels of the sanctuary.* The whole description reads like an account of the brazen sea given in 1 Kings vii. 23. For the latter also stood upon twelve oxen, and its brim was wrought "like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily, and it held two thousand baths."

The dimensions of the Mosaic laver are not so easily specified. Neither in capacity nor shape has any detailed information been supplied regarding it (Ex. xxx. 17-21). But as the vessel is always

* Sayce's "Early Israel and the Surrounding Nations," p. 251.

mentioned in connection with *its foot*, it is probable that it consisted of two different parts : (1) A hollow cavity at the base where the priests could wash their feet and hands ; (2) A reservoir or main body of the laver, containing that larger supply of water from which the lower receptacle was constantly replenished. This shape of the vessel would combine two distinct advantages—it would be more convenient for the washing of the feet, and it would preserve the water in the upper part of the laver pure, till it was drawn off for use. And that this was the shape of the laver in later Judaism is evident from the words of Josephus who speaks of the laver of purification which had a "*basin beneath*," where the priests might perform their daily ablutions before engaging in their holy service.

2. *Its Material*

It was made of the mirrors of the serving women who served at the door of the tent of meeting (Ex. xxxviii. 8). This fact is so interesting in itself, that it need not occasion surprise if many have given to it an emblematic turn, and have read this action of the Hebrew women as a bit of Old Testament symbolism. By giving up their bronze mirrors, it is said, they testified to the high value they set on the beauties of holiness. They were dressed in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, and were in no need of other personal adornment. Be this as it may, we cannot forget that in the Gospel narrative, a woman, who was a sinner, brought an alabaster cruse which she had obtained for *her* personal adornment, and poured out its deathless fragrance

upon the Saviour's feet—ready to say in the presence of His infinite compassion—

“My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

It is not necessary, however, to add with others that the bronze mirrors were retained for their original purpose—that having been adjusted on the brazen laver, they were left as looking-glasses for the convenience of the priests. There is nothing in the present passage to warrant any such assumption. The plain meaning of the writer is that, being metallic reflectors, they furnished the material out of which the brazen laver was made. Bezaleel had accepted the free-will offerings of the women, and fashioned the laver out of their gifts.

3. *Its Old Testament Use*

As a means of purification, the laver marked the step from the general service of sacrifice to the specific service of the priests. In the ritual of the altar, both offerer and priest were allowed to play a part. The one slew the victim, the other handled the blood. The one distributed the flesh, the other burned the fat. The one represented the family, the other personated the nation. And both these types of Old Testament priesthood were combined in the service of the altar. But in the ritual of the laver the arrangement was quite different. It stood there as a necessary preparation for the exercise of the priestly calling, and no one outside the Levitical order was permitted to bathe in its water. It led the way to the threshold of the sacred tent, and, as

such, it was reserved for those who were privileged to enter that holy place. It marked the first step and emphasised the need of the specific service of the priests.

On the other hand, the outer cleansing of the body was nothing more than a symbol of the inner cleansing of the heart. And as the entire nation was accepted or rejected in the persons of the officiating priesthood, the pious in Israel were ever led to exclaim, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps. xxiv. 3-4). Or as our Lord taught them on the hill of Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is the purification that fits a people or an individual for approaching the audience chamber of Jehovah. "I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 6).

4. *The New Testament fulfilment*

In Titus iii. 5 we find allusion made to a laver of regeneration, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the laver of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." If the symbolism of the altar points us to the work of the Saviour, the laver in turn directs us to the work of the divine Spirit. And the great Teacher in John iii. 7, 14, directed Nicodemus to both. But it is regeneration *and* renewal. This is the special point suggested by the symbolism of the laver, that there is first the total ablution of the Second

Birth, and then, the daily and hourly cleansing of the Spirit and the word (*cf.* John xiii. 10). He that is bathed and washed in the laver of water with the word is clean every whit. There is neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. He is sanctified and cleansed by the Lord himself, and now he is holy and without blemish, (Eph. v. 26-27).

Illustration.—On one occasion, a father was much tried by the disobedience of his young son. He planted a white post in the garden, and informed him that he would drive a nail into its whiteness every time he was proved guilty of any act of wrong-doing. By and by, the disfigured emblem became a stinging rebuke to the young offender, and he came to his father in real sorrow and faithfully promised amendment. Very well, was the reply—for every act of new obedience I will gladly pull a nail out: and in course of time, to the great joy of the wrong-doer, the last nail was extracted. But, added the father, is the post the same to-day as when we started? No, was the ominous answer, *the nail marks are left*. The healed wound always leaves a scar, and the young penitent was left to his own reflections, to apply the moral to himself. And yet see the greatness of the New Testament purification. The blood of Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Bathed in the laver of regeneration, and washed in the laver of water with the word, the apostle can write the words, that there is neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. The soul is presented holy and without blemish; for

so great is the efficacy of this New Testament cleansing that Jesus removes *even the nail marks*.

“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

13. THE CANDLESTICK.—Leaving the altar and laver in the outer court, we come next to the Sanctuary proper. This was an erection of acacia boards set in sockets of silver, and overhung with a fourfold covering of fine twined linen, etc., the work of the cunning workman. In dimensions it was 45 feet long by 15 feet wide, and 15 feet in height—the whole structure being divided into two rooms by the beautifully woven veil that covered the shrine of the deity. The first or holy place was double the size of the other, so that the Holy of Holies formed an exact cube the length and width and height being equal. Drawing aside the screen that covered the entrance to the holy place, we find three articles of furniture most closely connected with the daily ministration of the priests. These were the golden lampstand, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense : and as the first mentioned was the sole source of light to an otherwise dark apartment, we naturally begin with it.

1. *Its Construction*

The details given in Ex. xxv. 31-40 seem to be most minute ; but both in shape and ornamentation there are several particulars that are left quite indistinct. The height of the candlestick from the

ground, the arrangement of the branches around the stem, the question whether they rose to the same level as the central stalk, and the form of the embossed ornaments known as the knops and cups—all these are left indefinite and uncertain, and are very variously handled by different writers. One comes to the conclusion that it was 2 feet 6 inches in height—the same as the shewbread table which stood over against it : but another who remembers that the golden altar was half a cubit higher, is convinced that the lampstand must have been 3 feet 6 inches, in order to afford sufficient light for the officiating priests when they came in morning and evening to minister at the golden altar. One believes that the central stem and the six branches were all in one plane, thus affording a straight line of light : while another who is enamoured with the figure of a tree, is assured that the arms projected from the stem in different planes, thus presenting the whole body of light in the form of a globe. An equally large field for human ingenuity is found in connection with its symbolism. One writer is impressed by the ornamental series of a “cup, a knop and a flower” which occurs three times in the branches, and four times in the stem : and as the stem and the branches together give the sacred number seven, a symbolical meaning is forthwith attached to three, four, and seven. Even the almond shaped cups and flowers are not allowed to escape this spiritualising scalpel. The almond-tree, it is said, is the first to awaken from the sleep of winter, and to send forth its leaves and buds in spring, and therefore, none could be better fitted to express the

vigour and activity of that life which is so strikingly represented by the light of the golden candlestick. But instead of following these and such like fancies, it is sufficient to say that the costly material and elaborate workmanship probably had no other design than to add to the elegance and ornateness of the structure, precisely as the more elaborate parts of the high priest's dress were said to be for glory and for beauty. There was no gold outside the holy place, and there was no brass inside—the disposal of the metals no less than the arrangement of the courts, preparing us for the ever deepening sanctity of the shrine.

2. Its History

In keeping with the greater magnificence of Solomon's temple, ten golden lampstands were furnished for the illumination of the holy place (1 Kings vii. 49)—the original candlestick being brought up and stored as a relic in the sacred building (chap. viii. 4). And here, in all probability, it was allowed to remain until the invasion of the Chaldeans. Whether it perished in the general conflagration in 586 B.C. or was carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar along with the other vessels, and restored by Cyrus to Zerubabel in 538 (*cf.* 2 Kings xxiv. 13; Ezra v. 14), it is evident that in this respect as in others, the second temple compared but meanly with the splendour of the former Sanctuary; for instead of Solomon's ten candlesticks, ten tables of shewbread, etc., the book of Maccabees (iv. 49, 50) and Josephus (Wars vii. 5) speak as if there was only one. This may

have been a return to the simplicity of the Mosaic arrangement ; but to those who had seen the glory of Solomon's temple, it was verily the day of small things, and the new building in its diminished splendour, was as nothing in their eyes (Hag. ii. 3). Albeit, in the ideal temple of Ezekiel we are taken a step further. There is no mention of a candlestick at all—an anticipation, it may be, of the crowning vision of the Apocalypse, when as described in Rev. xxi. 23 the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. It is only on the basis of some such promise as this, that we can understand the divine word as spoken by Haggai—"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts, and in this house will I give peace" (ii. 9).

Coming to the Christian era, we have the well-known bas-relief on the Arch of Titus, which leaves no room for doubt that, at the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the golden candlestick was carried to Rome along with other sacred spoils. This was the first of its so-called "peregrinations" during the early Christian centuries.* It lay in the Temple of Peace for nearly four hundred years, but was seized and carried to Carthage in Africa as a part of the plunder when Rome was taken by the Vandals in 455. Then having been recaptured by the Romans in 533, it was brought to Constantinople, the then eastern capital of the empire, and finally restored by Justinian to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in

* See Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," xli.

Jerusalem where it was lost sight of. In the words of Gibbon, "the holy vessels of the Jewish Temple, after their long peregrinations, were respectfully deposited in the Christian Church of Jerusalem." But of the correctness of these reports which are at the basis of Gibbon's history, there is room for suspicion.

3. *Its Meaning*

✓ We can have no hesitation in saying that it represented Israel herself, as engaged in priestly service. Israel was an elect nation. She had been chosen of God to reflect His praise, and to illumine the surrounding darkness until all darkness being scattered the whole earth would be a great tabernacle filled with heaven's own light. Israel had thus to shine both for God and man. | She had to show forth the excellencies of Him who had called her out of darkness into His marvellous light, and to trim the golden flame of her divinely imparted knowledge, that in the spiritual seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth might come and bless themselves. Her election, therefore, did not mean the rejection of others. Why should the shutting in of some be the means of shutting others out? This is not the meaning of election in any age of the church. It was election to *serve*, and surely the very idea of service implies that the others can be served. Instead of leading the way to a Judaism that hated humanity, divine revelation was ever seeking to utter the words, "Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. lvi. 7). ✓ And thus the priestly nation, having been offered at the

altar of sacrifice and bathed in the laver of purification, was now summoned by the symbolism of the golden candlestick to enter into the service of the Eternal and hold aloft the torch of truth among the surrounding nations.]

Election and *inspiration*—this is the teaching of the OIL. The candlestick had to be fed continually with “pure olive oil beaten”—that is, oil prepared in the way which yielded the whitest, purest light by beating the unripe, green olives in a mortar (Ex. xxvii. 20). And this, as all expositors agree, is an expressive symbol of the divine Spirit. “It is not by might nor by power but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” This was the application of the figure made in Zechariah’s vision when the angel interpreted the two olive trees that stood beside the golden lampstand and fed it perpetually with consecrated oil (iv. 6). The light which Israel gave back to God in service was first of all divinely supplied by inspiration. The shining was dependent on the anointing. No one was sent a warfare on his own charges. The calling was supplemented by the chrism of a divine endowment.

And the same two truths have been written large for us. Instead of being weakened or eclipsed by the greatness of the Messianic fulfilment they have only been illumined and intensified by being “baptised into Christ.” “Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession that ye may shew forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet. ii. 9). There are both election and endowment in the priesthood of

Christian men—election to serve and endowment of the Holy Ghost—and both derived from Him who walks amidst the seven golden candlesticks and holds the seven stars in His right hand (Rev. i. 13). Elected to serve, perhaps to suffer, certainly to *shine*—to shine like stars in the darkness of midnight when no eye sees but God's. It is a sacred calling—one far beyond the sparks of our own kindling. The torch that is to lighten the world must be lit at the altar of God. We need an unction from the Holy One.

[14. THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD.—Opposite the golden candlestick, and on the north side of the holy place, stood the table of Shewbread with its two piles of unleavened loaves representing the twelve tribes of Israel.] Not Israel as such—wayward, disobedient and sinful; but Israel in its ideality—a nation or community of priests called and set apart to Jehovah. Israel in the camp and Israel in the holy place were two very different things. The one was a representation of what they really *were*—the other a picture of what they might *become*. The former had to be met and dealt with at the altar and laver in the outer court; the latter, when thus accepted and purified, might enter the sacred tent and engage in holy service. Even here, however, in the symbolism of the unleavened cakes, their holiness was purely ideal or ceremonial. Israel in itself was not holy—it was simply holy in the light of the divine thought and purpose. Let that light shine, let the teaching of the golden candlestick be a fully realised fact, and it would yet be seen what Israel was capable of

becoming: but let that light go out in darkness, let Israel refuse to hold aloft the torch of truth, and she might yet be accounted a veritable Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. i. 9)—a people that loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

1. *The Bread*

For a full description of the Shewbread or more correctly the *face*-bread, see Lev. xxiv. 5-9. It consisted of twelve loaves arranged in two piles: and being only a modified form of the meal-offering, it was, in all probability, unleavened (Lev. ii. 11). The size of the loaf was especially noteworthy. It contained two tenth parts of an ephah, that is, two omers, of fine flour (*cf.* Ex. xvi. 36): but as one omer was deemed sufficient eating for one person (ver. 16), it is evident that each loaf must have been of considerable size, containing, at least, one day's eating for two persons. May we not find in this a hint of a truth to be adduced later, that being a feast of sacramental communion, provision had to be made for *two* parties,—that while the sole consumers of the unleavened bread were the representatives of the deity, it was still a relic of the time when the worshipper no less than the deity was a participant at the sacrificial meal?

Be this as it may, the deepest truth, as mirrored in the unleavened cakes, is the thought of Israel's ideal. Not the thought of sacramental communion, however important that may be, but the paramount necessity of moral purity—the essence and goal of the theocracy. Bread itself is a forcible reminder of this truth. What is bread? It is the end or

outcome of the husbandman's toil. It is the reward for which he has laboured and waited all through the spring and summer. He ploughs and sows, he reaps and threshes, he grinds and bakes ; and then, when it is set before his face as fully prepared bread, he finds in its possession a ground of legitimate pleasure ; for it is at once the symbol and proof of his completed work. And what bread is to the husbandman holiness is to God. He, the Divine Husbandman, is working for the time when His own people shall be presented faultless before His presence with ineffable joy. That is the end He has in view : and therefore He ploughs and sows, reaps and threshes, that is, He teaches and inspires, disciplines and chastises, that in the end He may find in His people the fruits of holy living—the shewbread or face-bread of a pure and perfected life. That will be an aspect of the Church of God on which He will be able to look with divine approval.

2. *The Table*

The details are fully given in Ex. xxv. 23-30. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold like the other furniture in the holy place. It was approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, 21 inches broad and 28 inches high. Around the upper edge was a golden crown, serving no doubt to keep articles from falling off the table : while further down, and probably to bind the frame-work together, was a handbreadth border (3 inches) with a similar golden crown attached to it. Various other utensils of a subsidiary nature were also added as accompaniments to the main purpose of the table, *viz.* : “dishes”

for removing the loaves, "bowls" for holding the frankincense, and "cans and cups" for the use of the wine which entered into all meal-offerings.

In its origin, the Shewbread table is probably to be regarded as a late form of altar (Mal. i. 7). But in section II we have already found that the primitive altar was both a pillar and a pyre. It combined the two actions of sprinkling and burning. It was at once a rough embodiment of the deity over which the sacrificial blood was poured: and a suitable mound or cairn for the burning of the victim's flesh. It was both an idol and a hearth. The growth of Semitic ritual, however, carries us a step further. The blood poured on the altar was a divine libation, and the flesh consumed in sacrifice was an offering of divine food (*cf.* Ps. l. 13). Primitive man believed that the gods were not averse to come and partake of a sacrificial meal: and he was naïve enough to think that the more splendid and valuable his gifts, the more likely was he to secure the goodwill of the deity. Hence, by gifts and sacrifices he spread upon the altar a generous repast, and invited the god of his fathers to be present as his guest. The deity and his worshipper were participants at a common banquet. The sacrifice had become a feast, or a sacrament. So that if the sprinkling of the blood had been followed by the burning of the victim, the burning, in turn, had been supplemented by the conception of the eating. The altar was idol, hearth and *table* all in one.

And in this, we have the prototype of the Old Testament table of Shewbread. The Hebrew

worshipper, like the primitive Semite, had spread a table in the sacred tent and invited Jehovah, the God of Israel, to come and participate in an act of sacramental communion. Not indeed, that the priestly legislator imagined that the spiritual God of the Hebrews would come and feed upon mere material bread. The entire aim of Old Testament revelation was to correct and eliminate any such conception. But what Jehovah would not do, the priests who were his chosen servants might do in his behalf. And thus Sabbath by Sabbath the twelve unleavened loaves were removed from the table of Shewbread and handed over to the Ministers of the altar to be consumed by them alone (*cf.* Matt. xii. 4). This was one of the ways in which Jehovah received his share of the people's gifts—he resigned them in favour of his ministers.]

3. *The New Testament fulfilment*

“We have an altar (or table) whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb. xiii. 10). The first allusion in these words is not to the Sacrament of the Supper, but to the atoning efficacy of the great sacrifice, of which the Christian sacrament is the symbol. “Jesus, also that He might *sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate*” (ver. 12). As in the ritual of the Tabernacle, so here, in the teaching of the cross, the table of God is first and foremost an *altar*. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Sacramental communion must be prefaced by purification and atonement. But the altar is also a *table*. The blood shed in sacrifice, and

the offering laid upon the altar, have become spiritual nourishment. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him" (John vi. 55). He that cometh to Christ shall not hunger : the sacrifice has become a sacrament.

But mark the contrast between the two dispensations. The Antitype teaches by contrast as well as by resemblance. Instead of man spreading the table and inviting Jehovah as his guest, it is Jehovah who invites and welcomes man. He provides the sacrifice, and He prepares the feast, and says to all His people, "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved." Man has sought his God, and now the Father finds His child ; and they meet and ratify an everlasting covenant in an act of sacramental communion.

And thus in a real, though secondary sense, there may be a reference after all to the Sacrament of the Supper. For in the sphere of symbolism, what two better emblems could be imagined than the table of shewbread in the Old Testament and the Lord's table in the New? It is sacramental communion in both cases—communion which is founded upon redemption. So that when we turn to Ezekiel's ideal temple, and find that the table of shewbread is no longer mentioned, we may well be reminded of the more glorious temple of the Apocalypse, where in the brightness of the eternal Presence, the symbols of bread and wine have disappeared. For however precious the emblems may be, they are to lose themselves in the glory of the second

Advent. "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *until He come.*"

15. THE GOLDEN ALTAR.—In position, the altar of incense was more closely connected with the inner sanctuary than either the golden candlestick or the table of shewbread. It stood before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony (Ex. xxx. 6), before the throne, or before God, as in the fuller symbolism of the Apocalypse (Rev. viii. 3, ix. 13): and thus in Heb. ix. 4 it is placed within the second veil itself, and not simply in the first or holy place where it undoubtedly stood. This divergence on the part of the New Testament writer is not difficult to trace. It arises from the abridged character of his description. He is dealing with the prescribed ritual for the great day of atonement (*cf.* ver. 7), and his allusion to the golden altar must be read in the light of that fact. No doubt the offering of incense was a distinct part of the daily ministration, and as such, the altar was rightly placed beside the table and lampstand: but connected as it was with the mercy-seat on the day of atonement—for both were sprinkled with sacrificial blood, and the aroma of the incense was to penetrate within the veil—it is obvious that in addition to forming a part of the daily service, it also led the way into the holiest of all, and might easily come to be classed along with its furniture. It stood before the veil and waited for the fulness of the revelation. It was "the altar that belonged to the oracle" (1 Kings vi. 22).

1. *The Incense*

We begin with the incense, for, like shew-

bread and table, the incense is more important than the altar. It was made of the richest spices—stacte and onycha and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense after the art of the perfumer. And no other was to be made like it, every imitation for private use being strictly forbidden. It was to be placed before the testimony in the tent of meeting; it was most holy unto the Lord (Ex. xxx. 34-38).

[In view of the analogy of holy Scripture, it is sufficient to say that the incense ~~as thus prepared and offered~~ was a symbol of believing *prayer*.] It is so taken both by Psalmist and Apostle. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." "Golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the Saints" (Ps. cxli. 2, Rev. v. 8, viii. 3): but especially Luke i. 10 where the presenting of incense by Zacharias is accompanied by the prayers of the whole congregation which was assembled outside. The fragrant odour within, and the stream of intercession without, rose and blended in a cloud of sweetest perfume; for not more pleasing to the natural sense is the sweet aroma of the incense, than is the believing supplication of earnest men a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord.

"Prayer," says the Talmud, "is Israel's only weapon—a weapon inherited from its fathers, and tried in a thousand battles." And therefore it is rightly offered in the holy place beside the table and lampstand; for it is the one indispensable condition of attaining both. How shall Israel hold

aloft the torch of truth, as in the candlestick, or realise the greatness of her God-given ideal, as in the shewbread? How shall they achieve as a nation of priests the perfect exercise of their calling? Answer, if they *pray*—if they pray without ceasing—if they stand before the veil that hides the great Unseen, and say, like their “first father,” “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”

“Come, O thou Traveller unknown
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,
My company before is gone
And I am left alone with Thee.
With Thee all night I mean to stay
And wrestle till the break of day.”

All else, apart from this, is simply an arranging of the sacrifice upon the altar—a task as futile as that of the priests of Baal who had to leap upon the altar which they had made. True prayer, on the contrary, is the earnest spirit-taught cry of the prophet—the believing, upturned gaze of the Lord’s servant, who watches for the first flash of the divine fire that descends to consume the sacrifice. This is the secret of all true service and the source of all true piety. Israel can both shine and serve, if she also pray.

2. *The Altar*

This was a square box $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high by 21 inches square, and constructed of acacia boards all covered with gold. It was surrounded by a crown of gold and appendages called horns in each of the four corners: while rings and staves for its transit across the desert were also definitely specified

(Ex. xxx. 1-10). Its sole purpose was to support the pot of incense which was replenished morning and evening by the officiating priest. So that unless we can regard the incense or the prayer as a modified form of *sacrifice*, it is only in a vague or general sense that the term "altar" can be applied to such a pedestal. In point of fact, this is just what has been done. Both the incense and the prayer have been couched in sacrificial language. In the offering of incense, *e.g.* we have a distinct trace of early Semitic ritual. It points back to a time when frankincense was deemed particularly sacred as the gum of a very holy species of tree. It owed its virtue to the idea that it was the blood or life of an animate and divine plant: and as such, it was used not simply as an accompaniment to animal sacrifice, but as an independent "altar sacrifice" with a value peculiarly its own.* That the higher offering of prayer was similarly regarded in the more spiritual conceptions of the Hebrews is evident from the beautiful allusion to the Mosaic worship contained in Ps. v. 3, "In the morning will I order (or set forth as a sacrifice) my prayer unto thee, and will keep watch." It is the same Hebrew word as is used for the arranging of the wood upon the altar, or the unleavened cakes upon the shew-bread table: and would therefore suggest the idea of prayer as a kind of morning sacrifice, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. The man is standing beside an altar where he has carefully arranged his prayer: and now with hushed breath and beat-

* Robertson Smith's "Semites," p. 427; cf. Frazer's "Golden Bough," i. 61.

ing heart, he is waiting, Elijah-like, for the divine fire that is to consume the sacrifice—"I will keep watch."

But the best explanation of the term "altar" has yet to be mentioned. We have the close connection existing between the two altars, the altar of incense in the holy place, and the altar of burnt-offering in the outer court. (a) There was first and chiefly a connection by *fire*. The same divine flame that burned on the brazen altar was to be taken by the officiating priest and used for the burning of incense in the sacred tent (Lev. xvi. 12). Morning and evening, as the daily burnt-offering slowly consumed in the outer court, it had an exact counterpart in the sweet smelling incense of the holy place, which having been kindled by the same sacrificial flame continued to rise upwards as a "perpetual incense" (Ex. xxx. 8). All other fire was strange fire, and was strictly prohibited. See Lev. x. 1, where we have the peculiarly solemn death of Nadab and Abihu. They took their censers and put *strange* fire therein, and dared to approach the golden altar to offer incense: but a fire came forth from before the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Does the context suggest a reason for their unaccountable sacrilege? "The Lord spake unto Aaron saying, *drink no wine nor strong drink* . . . that ye die not . . . and that ye may put difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean." Ah, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Strong drink will even lay its leprous touch on the golden altar.

(b) A connection by *blood*. The daily intercourse

by fire was solemnly approved and ratified by a yearly sprinkling of sacrificial blood. On the great day of atonement, the blood of the sacrifice was not only daubed on the horns of the brazen altar, it was also brought into the first or holy place and applied to the horns of the altar of incense (Ex. xxx. 10). This is a detail which is specially noteworthy in view of the teaching of the great Antitype, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be fulfilled" (John xvi. 24). But why *in His name*? Because all true prayer is founded in sacrifice just as the greatness of His own intercession is based in the fulness of His atonement. The altar of prayer must ever be sprinkled with sacrificial blood. "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me."

This is something more and better than the legend of Sandalphon, the Angel of Prayer. He is represented as standing at the outermost gates of the Celestial City, and listening breathless to the various sounds that are wafted up through the midnight stars. He gathers up the prayers of all those who are heavy-laden, and these becoming flowers in his hands, shed their deathless fragrance through all the streets of the city.

"It is but a legend, I know—

(And yet)

When I look from my window at night,

And the welkin above is all white,

All throbbing and panting with stars,

Among them majestic is standing

Sandalphon the Angel, expanding

His pinions in nebulous bars." *

* See Longfellow's beautiful reproduction of this Talmudic legend.

But it is no angel after all, who gathers up the prayers of the saints. It is the great High Priest who has gone in through the curtain of blue, and who now stands at the golden altar to make continual intercession for us. *He* gathers up our prayers and presents them as incense before the throne. For both in earth and heaven His name is as ointment poured forth, and the holy place is ever perfumed with the aroma of His sacrifice.

16. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.—In drawing aside the veil that curtained off the most holy place, the high priest found himself in the adytum or throne-room of the Eternal. The contrast must have been one sufficiently striking even to an high priest. He left behind him the vessels of the holy place which so fitly represented man's service to God, and bowed in awe before the symbols of the shrine which as suitably represented God's service to man. If man had sought his God through the ritual of the one, God was now seeking man through the symbolism of the other, and saying as in Ex. xxv. 22, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." In law, in mercy, and in divine communion Jehovah was waiting to instruct and inspire his people. But the time of unveiling was not yet ; the darkness of the shrine must be allowed to keep its secret, until in Israel's golden age the Lord whom they sought would suddenly come to his temple, and the glory of the Lord would be revealed. Then indeed, the symbols would disappear, losing themselves like stars in the brightness of the sunrise ; the veil of the Holiest would be rent from top to bottom, and

man, with unveiled face, would see the glory of the Lord.

1. *The Ark and its Contents*

As described in Ex. xxv. 10-16, the ark was a hollow case or chest formed of acacia boards and overlaid with pure gold "within and without." In dimensions it was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high—surrounded by a golden crown around the top, like the ornamental border on the table of shewbread and the golden altar. It does not seem to have had a lid, its place being supplied by the mercy-seat, which supported the cherubim on the two ends thereof: but rings of gold, and staves never to be withdrawn, are expressly mentioned, as in all the other vessels of the sanctuary.

Inside the ark were deposited the two tables of the covenant which God gave to Moses; and if the Jewish tradition can be accepted as trustworthy, there were also placed beside them the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded (*cf.* Heb. ix. 4). But of this there is not a trace in the original passages (Ex. xvi. 34; Num. xvii. 10). The proper contents of the ark were simply the tables of the law, and it was just because it was regarded as the repository of these, that it won so high a place in the affections and reverence of God's people. It was the symbol and pledge of the *covenant*.

The forming of a covenant was quite a familiar transaction among the early Semites. When two tribes were anxious to remain at peace, and to respect each other's possessions, and desired inter-

marriage and commercial intercourse, they concluded a covenant. Witness the compact between Abraham and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, Joshua and the Gibeonites, Jonathan and David (Gen. xxi. 32 ; xxxi. 44 ; Josh. ix. 6 ; 1 Sam. xviii. 3). Besides, these covenant contracts were accompanied by certain solemn acts, as for instance, the eating of salt, the sprinkling of blood, but chiefly the partaking of a common sacrificial meal (Num. xviii. 19 ; Lev. ii. 13 ; Ex. xxiv. 8 ; Gen. xxxi. 54). The significance of this meal cannot be over estimated. It is at the basis of all Semitic covenants. When the two parties have eaten of the same victim, and thus become participants in a common life, a living bond of union is immediately formed between them, and they are no longer enemies but brothers.

When Israel then, is called into fellowship with God, a terminology is already in use to describe their mutual relationship. It is called the establishing of a covenant between God and His people (Gen. ix. 9 ; Isa. lv. 3). This is the national covenant of Israel, or covenant of law—a moral and religious contract by which their history as a nation so grandly begins, and they themselves are set apart as a community or kingdom of priests (Ex. xxiv. 4-11). And it is ratified by *blood*—the sacred “blood of the covenant” which is sprinkled now on the altar, and then on the people, and refuses to be effaced from the conscience or the creed of Israel until, in the fulness of time, the blood of the old gives place to the wine of the new, as the Lamb of “nobler name” and “richer blood” makes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.

The two sides of this covenant relationship are

expressed by the two supplementary conceptions of the divine election of love and the human obligation of law. Love, as when we read "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself . . . because the Lord loveth you, and because He would keep the oath which He sware unto your fathers" (Deut. vii. 6-8). And law, as when we are reminded that the sum of human obligation is just the decalogue or "ten words" of Moses, the principle of which is expressed in the words, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." On the faithful discharge of these obligations the very existence of the covenant depends. Hence when Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people all the "conditions" (R.V.) on which the covenant was based, they answered with one voice, and said, "all that the Lord hath spoken will we do and be obedient" (Ex. xxiv. 7). The will of God was accepted by the will of man. The election of love was responded to by the obedience of law.

2. *The Ark as Israel's Standard.*

All through the wilderness journey, and in the conquest of the land, the Hebrew tribes had to face the dangers and meet the requirements of a wandering and warlike life. Jehovah was a "man of war," and they, His true worshippers, were essentially a nation of warriors. The camp was at once the school in which they were trained for national independence, and the sanctuary in which they imbibed the sanctions of religion and morality. "The camp was at once the *cradle* in which the nation was nursed, and the *smithy* in which it was welded into

unity: it was also the primitive *sanctuary*—there Israel was, and there was Jehovah.”* As such, they required a rallying-point or standard which was adapted to the needs of that warlike age, and this they found in the so-called ark of the covenant, that confessedly Mosaic symbol of the theocracy. By it the idea of Jehovah’s constant presence with His people was symbolically expressed; and when they saw it borne aloft on the shoulders of the priests, and marching in front of the host (*cf.* Josh. iii. 6) they immediately raised the shout of battle, and rushed upon the foe (*cf.* 1 Sam. iv. 5). Rightly used by the hosts of Israel the ark of the covenant was the promise and pledge of victory, for Jehovah Himself had marched out at the head of their armies, and the rod of the oppressor was utterly broken, as in the day of Midian. Hence the dismay of Eli when he heard that the ark of God had been captured by the Philistines, and the despair of his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, who named her child Ichabod, saying “the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.” The capture of the mystic symbol was the sign of Israel’s ignominious defeat: the ensign of the theocratic people had gone into captivity.

In the sequel, however, another feature connected with the ark is prominently brought into the foreground. It was charged with terrible energy in wreaking vengeance on the profane. It proved to be a source of spiritual danger as well as of blessing; for like the magnetic principle of polarity, it could repel as well as attract, and every-

* Art. “Israel” in *Ency. Brit.*

one who came into touch with its powerful currents might be destroyed or shrivelled up on the spot. Dagon, *e.g.* the god of Ashdod was cast down and broken to pieces ; the various cities of Philistia were visited by a most grievous scourge, and even the men of Beth-shemesh who were reaping in the valley of Sorek when the ark returned were smitten with a great slaughter, because they had dared to look into the sacred symbol. Twenty years later, when David himself was bringing the ark to the city of Jerusalem, the same disastrous effects were again experienced. Instead of carrying it on their shoulders in the original and authorised manner, they had followed the precedent of the Philistines, in preparing a new cart and taking two milch kine to convey it from the house of Abinadab. But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, the procession was tragically interrupted by the death of Uzzah. The oxen happened to stumble on the uneven road, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the sacred vessel ; but the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his rashness, and there he died by the ark of God (2 Sam. vi. 7).

What this means for every age is the supreme necessity of *reverence* for divine things. Nothing can take the place of a wholesome awe or godly fear in the relationship that exists between God and man. "To this man will I look, saith the Lord of hosts, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word.*" *Cf.* the use of "godly fear" (*εὐλάβεια*) in Heb. v. 7 and xii. 28. According to its derivation it "signifies the careful

taking hold and wary handling of some precious yet fragile vessel, which with ruder or less anxious handling might easily be broken."* Is this the way in which we handle the word of God, that word, which like the two tables in the ark, is the symbol of Jehovah's presence? For it may smite as well as save. Other books may appeal to understanding or to fancy, but this book appeals to conscience and to faith. Other books may seek our attention, but this book demands it—

Eye of God's word, where'er we turn
Ever upon us."

17. THE MERCY-SEAT.—Another feature connected with the ark has yet to be mentioned—it was known as the ark of the *testimony*. (Ex. xxv. 22). It was a testimony to Israel that so long as they remained faithful to their covenant obligations, Jehovah, the God of their fathers, would also be found faithful to his covenant promise. "I will dwell among them and they shall be my people and I will be their God." It was a witness to keep them in touch with God's electing love. For turn where we will in the pages of Holy Scripture, the love of God in choosing and blessing Israel is the theme and joy of all the sacred writers. He bare them on eagles' wings. He drew them with the cords of love. He chose them as His peculiar treasure, His kingdom of priests, His Jeshurun. He compassed them about, He cared for them, He kept them as the apple of His eye.

But why thus dwell on the love of God *for* Israel,

* Trench, "Greek Synonyms."

if not to excite responsive love *in* Israel—responsive love as the deepest motive for Old Testament morality?—a design, indeed, which is already seen in Ex. xix. 4-5, which has been called “the gospel of the Old Testament”*: and in Ex. xx. 2 where the decalogue places at the head of all its demands what Jehovah has done for His people. Legal righteousness is not the burthen of the Old Testament after all, and legal righteousness is not, and cannot be, the burthen of any New Testament creed. Righteousness, as in the Pauline Epistles, is often a synonym for grace (Ps. ciii. 17). There was a Power not themselves, making for *mercy*.

1. *The Mercy-seat as a Covering*

The ark was not only a testimony *to* Israel, telling of the constancy of the divine love: it was also a testimony *against* Israel testifying to the inconstancy of their promised obedience. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Israel’s sin, alas, was most heinous. It was not simply the disobedience of those who had sinned without law, but the apostasy of those who had slighted the highest law of all—the law of covenant love. Instead of fulfilling the conditions on which that divine contract was based, they had transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant. And now the two tables in the ark lifted up their voice against them. They testified, as in the day when Moses cast them beneath the Mount, that Israel was a

* Ewald.

rebellious and stiff-necked people—that the best of them was as a brier, and the most upright was worse than a thorn hedge—"there is none that doeth good, no not one."

Yet the love of God was neither chilled by their neglect, nor estranged beyond recall by their perversity. He was long-suffering and slow to anger, and did not forget the oath which He swore unto their fathers. He had known them and loved them for their fathers' sake, and now He would save them and keep them for His own (Ex. xxxii. 13-14, Isa. xlviii. 9-11). Even when He punished it would be a Father's hand that smote them. He would not retain His anger for ever (Ps. lxxxix. 33-34).

And thus we have the symbolism of the blood-stained propitiatory (Lev. xvi. 14). Between the tables of stone that spoke of Israel's sin, and the divine Shekinah which dwelt above the ark, there was interposed the golden plate of the Mercy-seat, and this, as on the great day of atonement, was sprinkled with sacrificial blood. Jehovah had devised means whereby His banished ones might be restored to Him: and now Israel's sin was symbolically covered—it was hid under the covering of the blood (*cf.* Ex. xii. 13).

But man's part is also clearly specified. It consisted (1) of *true compunction of soul*, as when we read in Lev. xvi. 29-34, that they were to afflict their souls in one supreme act of humiliation; and (2) *implicit trust in the sacrifice*, as when it is added that the high priest was to array himself in his holy garments, and make an atonement for the children of Israel every year. There was at once a solemn

fast, and a divinely appointed sacrifice—a true repentance of sin, and an unfaltering faith in God's salvation : and these, both in the Old Testament and in the New, are ever the prescribed means of reconciliation (*cf.* Acts xx. 21). "O Israel return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

2. *The Mercy-seat as a basis of Communion*

It is a great thought with which the Psalmist has made us familiar in Ps. viii. 3-4, that man may have communion with God *in nature*. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained ; what is man that Thou are mindful of him? and the Son of Man that Thou visitest Him?"

"Thought was not : in enjoyment it expired ;
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request :
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him : it was blessedness and love."

The severity of one's lot may rob him of the privilege of having a room of his own, the closet where he can shut to the door, and then turn round to face the Eternal : but no one can rob him of the light of the evening stars, or the solitude that lingers on mountain, field, or shore. Away out there in the closet of his heavenly Father, the child of the kingdom may have sweet and deep communion.

It is even a greater truth that man may enter

into communion with God through *His word*. In the sixth Psalm the Psalmist has added to his apostrophe to nature, those august words, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." You go into a library sometimes, and as you gaze around on the tiers of old volumes, you ask where is all the fire of genius, or force of intellect out of which these dust-covered volumes had their rise and origin? And the answer is, it is all pent up there in the printed pages. Does anyone doubt it? Let a sympathetic mind draw near to the printed words, and immediately the fire that burned in the author's soul passes over into the soul of the reader : and he knows that he is enjoying sweet communion with

" the great of old
The dead but sceptred sov'reigns who still rule
Our spirits from their urns."

The same is true of the Book of books. No doubt the sacred volume may be read by careless souls—souls that see no beauty in a flower, and hear no melody in the sea, and to whom the words of Holy Writ are words and nothing more. But once let the touch of faith approach the venerated pages—once let the eye of reverence scan the lines, and what a change will be found to pass over the sacred story ! Gleams of a light never seen on mountain or shore will leap forth from the page ; a Shekinah and a Mercy-seat will be found set up in every chapter ; the fire will continue to burn as the heart continues to muse ; and the believer will feel in the holy

ecstasy of love that he has entered into communion with God through His Word.

But the greatest truth has yet to be noted. We have the symbolism of the Mercy-seat. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy-seat" (Ex. xxv. 22). In imagination try to accompany the high priest as he entered year by year into the inner sanctuary. You almost hold your breath as you enter into *that* closet and shut to that door. You feel that there, if anywhere, you have all the silence and secrecy that the heart of man could wish. And God is also there in His word; for inside the sacred ark are placed the two tables of the law which God gave to Moses. There are both the mountain and the book in this place. But there is also something else and something better. For what mean these drops red like crimson falling from the fingers of the high priest? What means this offering of sacrificial blood sprinkled upon the Mercy-seat? Are the mountain and the book not enough? Are the silence and instruction not sufficient? No, without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Silence, instruction *and sacrifice*—that is the three-fold basis of all true communion. God must meet man *in His Son*.

Do not marvel, then, on the standpoint of the New Testament fulfilment, at that profound declaration of the apostle, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. For He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the

righteousness of God in him." Both in nature and in the Book, but supremely in Jesus Christ, man may have communion with God.

18. THE CHERUBIM.—On the difficult subject of the Old Testament cherubim, there are at least five passages of primary importance which ought to be examined by the biblical student—(1) Gen. iii. 24 where the cherubim, with the flame of a turning sword, are stationed at the east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life; (2) Ex. xxv. 18-22 in which Moses was commissioned to make two cherubim of beaten gold for the inner shrine of the sanctuary; (3) 1 Kings vi. 23-29 where Solomon, at the erection of the temple, repeated, though on a much more magnificent scale, the previous design of the tabernacle; (4) Ezek. i. and x., a description which in some respects is the most distinctive utterance of all—the appearance, composite nature and position of the "living creatures" being given with the utmost minuteness; (5) Rev. iv. and v. where the same "celestial genii" appear in company with the four-and-twenty elders, as four living creatures in the presence of God Most High.

In examining these and similar sources of information, we may sum up our knowledge of the Old Testament cherubim as follows—

1. *Their Shape*

On this point the first three passages tell us next to nothing. There is a strange silence observable in Genesis, Exodus, and 1 Kings, regarding the form of these two symbolical figures. Josephus

assures us that no one knew what was their exact shape. All that we learn from either tabernacle or temple is that they were possessed of *faces* and *wings*, and the reference in Gen. iii. 24 does not tell us even that. The reader of these earlier narratives is left in almost complete ignorance respecting the nature and general appearance of the cherubim. But when we turn to the prophecy of Ezekiel or the Apocalypse of St John, the case is quite different. Both these books inform us that the cherubic figures were multiform or composite in shape. They had the face of a man, the face of an ox, the face of a lion and the face of an eagle. In Ezekiel each living creature had all the four faces joined in one body, but in the Revelation this fourfold creaturehood is resolved into its separate parts, and each part is expanded into a whole. There are still the same four elements in the New Testament symbolism, but each is conceived as an entire creature by itself. "The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle." The human family as in the man, domesticated animals as in the ox, wild animals as in the lion, and the feathered tribes as in the eagle, were all represented in the fourfold figure of the cherubim. Nay, we may even think of the vegetable world as having its part also in the representation, for both in Solomon's temple and in the ideal temple of Ezekiel, when the cherubim came to be carved on the temple walls, palm trees and open flowers entered into the symbolism (1 Kings vi. 29 ; Ezek. xli. 18) It is in this way that we can appreciate the conten-

tion of those who affirm that the term "Cherub" is to be connected with the Assyrian words *Kirubu* and *Kurubu*, the one being a synonym for the steer-god whose winged image filled the place of guardian at the entrance of the Assyrian palaces, and the other, according to some, being a synonym for the vulture.*

2. *Their Position*

The word "Cherub" is supposed to be of Babylonian origin, and to come from a root which means "to approach" or "be near."† Perhaps it originally signified one who was *near to God*. This certainly is the position they occupy in the pages of Holy Scripture. What St John beheld, in Rev. iv. 6, is substantially true of all the other passages, that while there are various circles of heavenly existences round about the throne, the four living creatures which were full of eyes before and behind were the first and nearest. They are described as being in the midst of the throne and round about the throne—not only round about it, like the four-and-twenty elders, but also in the midst of it, its nearest supporters and most loyal guardians. They are never represented as being sent forth as angels to do any manner of service outside and at a distance from the central majesty, but are always exhibited in company with the elders, as worshipping and serving in its immediate vicinity. Their position at the gate of Paradise and in the Holy of Holies teaches the same general truth. In the garden of Eden the presence of God was known. In its cool retreat

* Prof. Cheyne in *Ency. Brit.*

† So Prof. Sayce.

man might catch the sound of a divine footfall, "walking in the cool of the day." And thus, like the living creatures before the throne, the cherubim were set at the eastern gate of the garden to keep the spot so fully consecrated by the august visits of the King. In the Mosaic sanctuary, which was also a house of God, they were erected on each end of the Lord's propitiatory to represent the majesty and protect the sanctity of that divine Shekinah. For just as the griffins and sphinxes of Babylonia protected the thresholds of Bel and Nebo, so the composite figures of the cherubim were stationed on the very threshold of Deity, to stand in the presence and safeguard the honour of the Eternal.

3. *Their Meaning*

(a) Everything connected with the inner sanctuary had special reference to *Jehovah*. The ark declared His will, the mercy-seat proclaimed His forgiving love, and the cherubim, in turn, as the guardians of His throne, reminded Israel of the awe-inspiring character of His holiness. It cannot be affirmed, in any sense, that the cherubim were symbols of *Jehovah*; for in accordance with the truth already expressed in the Second Commandment, no image or representation of God could ever be legally sanctioned. But none the less were these two figures the symbolical guardians of His attributes, testifying to man that God's will and character are such, that all sin is, and ever must be, visited by righteous judgment—that nothing unclean could remain in Paradise, nothing unworthy come near to the Holy of Holies, and nothing that worketh

abomination or maketh a lie gain an entrance into the Kingdom above.

And that no one might fail to feel the full force of this solemn truth, the prophecy of Ezekiel and the apocalypse of St John add two other details—that the cherubim were full of eyes before and behind, and rested not day and night in their worship. Omniscience and never-resting activity, these are the two attributes that are specially brought into prominence by this description; and we feel as we read that the vengeance pronounced against sin is no empty threat; for God is fully cognisant of the evil, and is fired with a holy jealousy to vindicate the good. “Thou God seest me” is a truth which no one can afford to neglect. Let no one dare to act presumptuously in the sight of that all-seeing Eye.

(β) But however obvious this divine reference may be, the cherubim must also be interpreted in relation to *man*. They were of composite nature and represented in some appreciable measure the whole of creation. Universal nature suffered in man’s sin (Gen. iii. 17).

“Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost.”

But nature also was to be benefited by man’s restoration. It is to be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. viii. 21, *cf.* Acts iii. 21, 2 Pet. iii. 13). And if the flaming sword or the shed blood was a solemn reminder of the one, the composite figures of the cherubim were as suitable a reminder of the other. Man, ox, lion and eagle were all combined in the

mystic symbol—a fact which testified that the God of heaven was still the God of nature and of man.

(γ) There remains another lesson from the Cherubim. *Nature* in all her aspects is to be studied and loved. The man, the ox, the lion and the eagle—nay, the palm trees and the open flowers are all dear to the heart of God, and they ought to be known and prized by us. For man is meant to be creation's mouthpiece and nature's high priest. But it is nature viewed from the standpoint of redemption. The cherubim were not alone either at the gate of Paradise or in the Old Testament Holy of Holies. In the one case they were associated with the flaming sword, and in the other with the sprinkling of sacrificial blood. Both man and nature had been blighted by sin, but One who would put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself would come and inspire both to higher and finer issues. He would come and tabernacle among men, and observe, handle, and love the objects of this lower world. The fulness of that promise has been realised. The earth has felt the impress of His blessed feet. The trees, the flowers, and the birds have gladdened His loving eye. The stars have watched His agony, and the winds have been hushed to hear His groan. And now none of all these objects in nature can any longer be thought of apart from the halo of His blessed life. Man, therefore, who is the high priest of nature must not be far from the high priest of redemption. The fragrance of the flower, the music of the sea and the shining of the star are the incense with which he is to fill the censer of his spirit; but the flowers he gathers, and the stars he loves, must not be very far from THE CROSS.

NOTE (p. 48).

On the assumption that early religion is closely related to kinship, it is supposed that, on the whole, men lived on very easy terms with their tribal God. The Deity might be displeased for a season with the character of their worship or the paucity of their gifts; but he would never allow His anger to be carried so far as to seriously imperil the well-being or existence of the tribe. Like Chemosh, the God of the Moabites, He might be angry with his land many days, and allow Omri the King of Israel to oppress Moab: but ere long, that temporary displeasure would be turned away, and he would say to Mesha, as recorded on the Moabite stone—go, drive them out. (*Cf. Robertson Smith's Semites*, p. 55.) See also *Frazer's Golden Bough*, p. 31, where primitive man, instead of being frightened and coerced by supernatural beings, supposes himself to stand on a footing of tolerable equality with them, and to be able to frighten or coerce them into doing his will.

Professor Schultz, however, is equally convinced that the opposite was the case. Dealing with the elemental nature-worship of the Semitic pastoral tribes, he says, "the root feeling is fear of God, and that probably not in the highest sense of the word, since the Deity is not primarily ethical, but only holy and terrible." (*O.T. Theology*, vol. i. 45.) Indeed when Robertson Smith comes to deal with the subject of *taboos*, he more than gives back what he has seemed to take away in his previous treatment of kinship. The divine kinsman may not be a malevolent power in the experience of his own kin, but everything connected with his sanctuary or worship is so surrounded by supernatural dangers, that the very holiness by which he is known and feared is shunned like an infectious disease. "Every place and thing which has natural associations with the God is regarded; if I may borrow a metaphor from electricity, as charged with divine energy, and ready at any moment to discharge itself to the destruction of the man who presumes to approach it unduly." "There is no part of life in which the savage does not feel himself to be surrounded by mysterious agencies, and recognise the need of walking warily." (*Religion of the Semites*, pp. 151-2.) Obviously the main difficulty is not to decide between these two views of antique religion; but to find a theory sufficiently comprehensive to include both series of facts.

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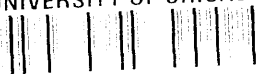
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